aSyLuM™

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Once, so the stories go,
the skies were all blue and the people all whole.
Now the sky's filled with soot,
and the sun's never seen;
our bodies may be whole,
but our minds are INSANE!

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Special Thanks to:
Jim Eckhardt for the use of his jacket
Ben Jabenis, for his eternal enthusiasm
Jen Purcell, for always supporting me without pushing

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Disclaimer: This game is not meant to belittle or mock the very real issue of mental illness, nor does it condone any of the extreme behavior that is discussed within. This game is a fiction, built around an invented future, and should not be taken as reality in any way. Also, although the subject of mental disorder has been carefully researched, the material contained herein should not be viewed as a definitive source of information on such a subject. This game is intended for entertainment purposes only.

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Introduction

Hello, and welcome to my insanity! This game was first conceived in March of 1996, but I've been involved in game design for several years more than that, and I have been informed by various friends that I am both highly creative and highly individualistic. These are traits which are not exactly conducive to "fitting in" in everyday society, especially together, and, in the past, they have been the cause of several inventors and artists being labeled "insane." Anyway, it once occurred to me that most truly interesting characters are so because they have what we politely refer to as eccentricities, little quirks and oddities that distinguish them from the general populace. Obviously, some quirks are more noticeable than others — someone with a penchant for burning down department stores does tend to get more attention than someone who collects small porcelain dolls. But in this day and age, as the fate of the world as pictured in literature and film grows darker and darker, eccentricities must become more and more pronounced before they are noticed. Also, with all of the stress and uncertainty in the world, mental health has become both a major issue of concern and a common point of focus.

With all of this in mind, I decided to go a bit out of my mind and devise a game where the characters are all — in a word — insane. After all, as the Joker once said about death, "It's strangely liberating." I hope you agree.

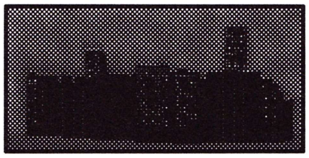
Enter the world of Asylum, where the goal is no longer to stay sane — it's far too late for that. Just try to survive, and do whatever it is that strikes your fancy.

- Aaron Rosenberg
9/25/96

Section 1

Setting

"Bargain Basement" -- Part One



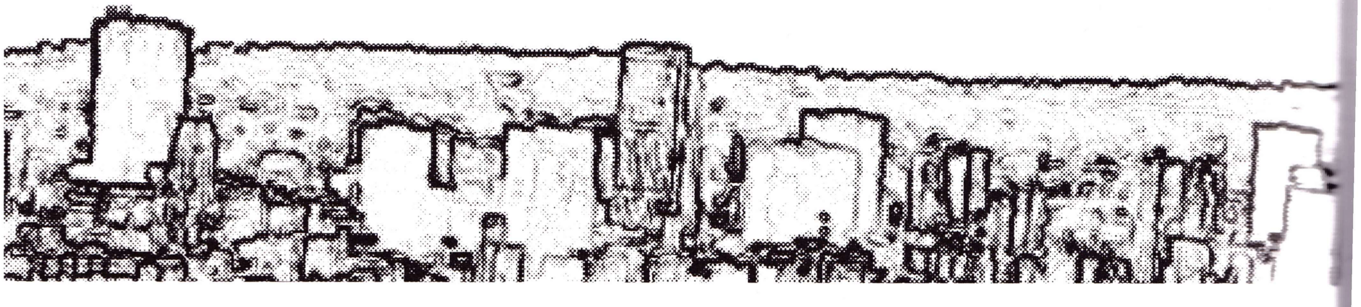
A gout of flame heralded the end of yet another of the Ward's less fortunate Inmates, and Jason cowered back among the rubble, unable to tear his eyes from the grisly and all-too-common ritual. The Lifts checked for additional bodies, found none, and, having completed their duty, slid the heavy iron door shut and turned to go.

Jason watched them leave, then waited an additional minute or two before worming back out of his hiding place. The rumor about Celeste apparently wasn't true, because if one of her rivals had killed her the body would have turned up here by now, added to the pile of other recent dead and tossed without fanfare into the hot flames. Jason was glad he hadn't seen her lifeless body there — despite the fact that she was one of the Shallow People she wasn't completely brain-dead or totally antagonistic to others, and after meeting once on the Beltway the two of them had formed an uneasy friendship. Almost all of Jason's relationships with others were uneasy, of course, but they were still better than nothing, and he cherished each one for as long as it lasted.

Despite the fact that his friend was probably still alive, seeing Dead End so closely sank any relief he might have felt, and Jason's feet dragged as he trudged back towards home. He picked up a small chunk of cement from the remains of an old building and, to take his mind off the finality that awaited him, threw it hard at a small two-story across the street, watching the missile enter the gaping hole where the front wall had been and hearing with satisfaction the clatter of stone colliding with glass and metal.

Then he frowned. What was metal doing all the way out here? Most of these places had been stripped of anything valuable ages ago, by the original Inmates, and it was rare for anything metal to go untouched. But no one shouted at him for his intrusion, so it wasn't some private home he'd mauled — despite himself, Jason's mind started spinning out possibilities, and his eyes brightened as he scampered across the street in the direction the cement had gone. Judging from what remained of the front wall, the two-story had been mostly brick, but the pile of scattered and shattered bricks that littered the ground didn't seem large enough to have filled in the gap where the cement had entered, which suggested that either some of the bricks had been carted away or the rest of the wall had been one or more large windows — Jason had seen pictures of places like that. Most of them, he remembered excitedly, were shops of some sort.

A shop! The notion that he could have found one of those mythical warehouses left him quivering, and it was with exaggerated care that Jason picked his way through the wreckage, past century-old trash, constantly dividing his attention



between the potential treasure at his feet and the dangerously open wall at his back.

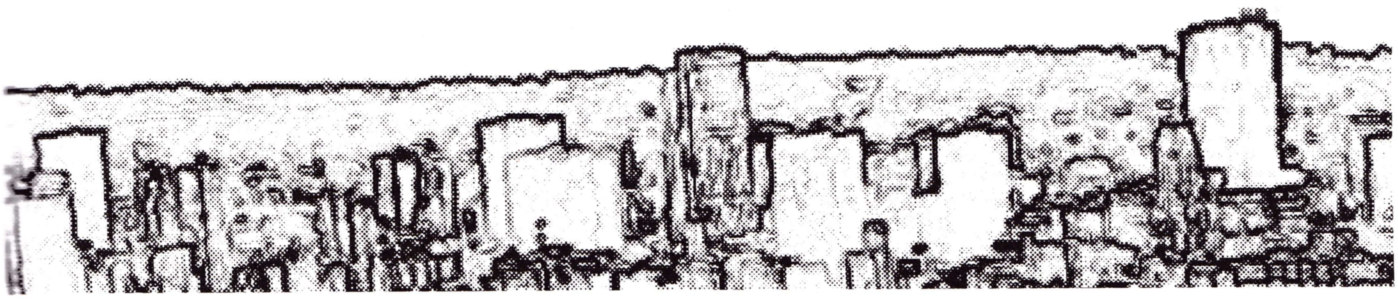
The trash all around him revealed itself, over several hours of painstaking search, to be just that —trash. Obviously it had been picked over, as he had suspected, and Jason sighed at his own optimism as he turned to go. And, as he turned, his eyes caught a faint glint off to the side. The glint of dull metal.

There were old, moldy boxes in the way, and he shoved them aside hastily, then caught his breath. It was a door! That in and of itself was unusual — the portal was intact, made of metal, and few doors had survived the hardships of the Ward so undamaged. But the real shock was that it was securely locked — from the outside. And the lock had rusted in place, which meant it couldn't have been disturbed in years.

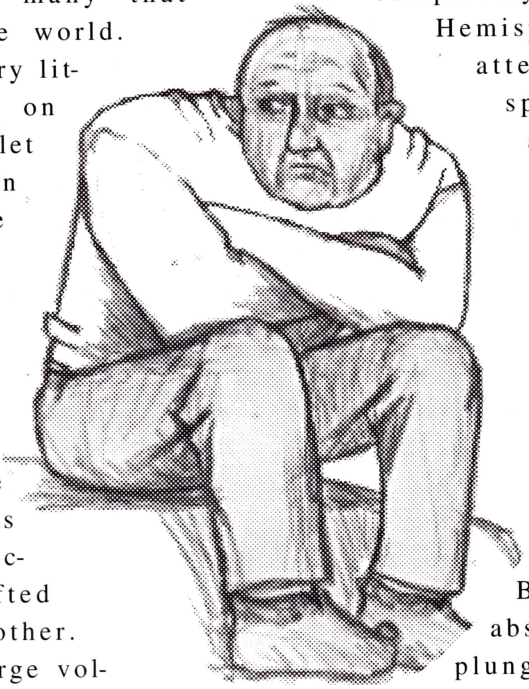
No one would bother to lock a door behind them after they'd stripped the place, which meant it had never been searched. And that meant —

Jason's hand was already reaching for the bolt when his brain registered the thick cable that ran next to it up the wall, and the small sign nailed beside it. He froze in mid-motion, staring helplessly at the neatly lettered square, then gulped and retreated a step to think. It only took him a minute. Then he covered the door back up again, extricated himself from the building — checking first to make sure no one else was around — and squinted up at the sky.

The swirling turmoil that was the Blanket Seed showed faint bands of light through it, which meant it was early morning. Mary would be at the train soon, and he'd meet her there. Jason took one last look at his treasure, memorizing its location, and then headed off at a trot to find his one real friend.



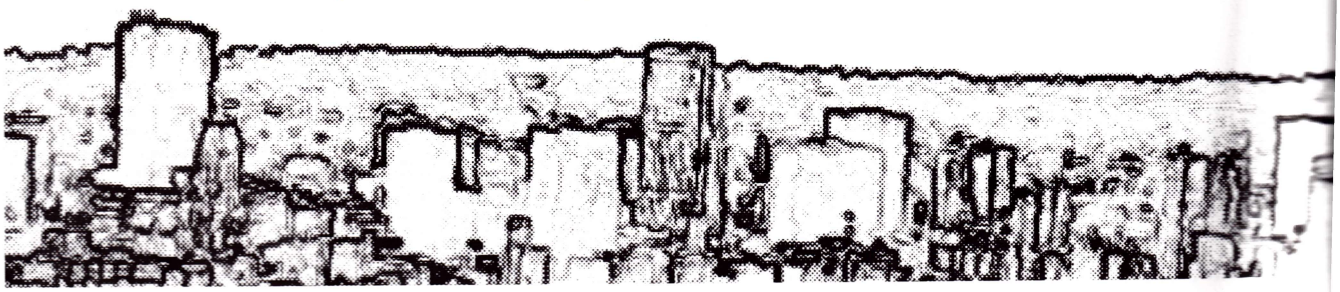
Timeline of Events



The year 2000 was considered (erroneously) to be the end of the Second Millennium, and to many that meant the end of the world. However, that year very little actually occurred on even a political level, let alone a global one. In fact, other than the United States absorbing both Canada and Mexico, the only noticeable event was a series of slight tremors felt across the Western Hemisphere and as far south as Australia as several tectonic plates shifted slightly against each other.

In 2003, two large volcanoes on the isles of Hawaii erupted almost simultaneously, having been re-energized by the tectonic activity three years before. These volcanoes spewed forth a great deal of lava, obliterating all human habitations on the islands, but more importantly their eruption caused new air patterns to emerge, and a vast upsurge of air, filled with some soot but also with volatile gasses and various fungi and algae, was carried into the upper atmosphere. A particular strain of the algae, which was later dubbed Blanket Seed, developed a strange reaction to the gasses around it. Instead of devoting all of its hydrogen to the production of sugars, the algae stored some of the volatile gas in tiny pockets, which provided it with enough buoyancy to remain in the upper atmosphere. The algae began to proliferate rapidly, due to the increased amount of sunlight available, and within a matter of months completely covered the Western Hemisphere. Scientists attempted to burn the spreading plant matter away, but discovered that the majority of the algae had, presumably due to the extremely flammable nature of the surrounding hydrogen, mutated into an inflammable form. By the start of 2004 the upper atmosphere was completely coated in a layer of Blanket Seed, which absorbed all sunlight and plunged the entire planet into perpetual fog.

From 2004 to 2006 the world experienced widespread depression, paranoia, and hysteria, as the psychological effects of sunlight deprivation set in. Areas such as Scotland and Seattle that did not often see the Sun were more resistant, but eventually even their populations began to show signs of strain. Scientists and engineers in several countries had mobilized as soon as the danger was realized, and now that attempts to remove the algae had failed they turned their efforts to adapting and surviving the change. Organized groups worked feverishly to build gigantic su

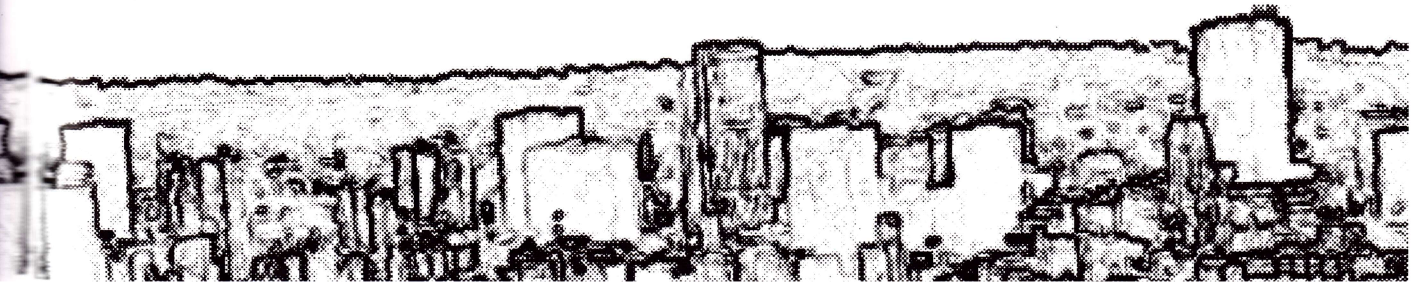


lamps with built-in diurnal timers so that food could still be grown normally. Unfortunately, those working on such refuges also eventually succumbed to the strain, and most of the planned relief efforts were never finished. In the United States these lamps were set in the Midwest, which was renamed the Wheatfields and later just Fields.

In 2007 the War broke out — no one is entirely sure who started it, as several world leaders were already exhibiting symptoms of egomania and psychopathic tendencies, but as soon as the first shots were fired every country around the world jumped eagerly into the fray, using the conflict as much to focus citizens' attention elsewhere and to provide a way to vent stress as out of any real fear or desire for conquest. No nuclear weapons were used, perhaps because the leaders no longer had enough presence of mind to disarm their own security measures, but chemical agents were introduced in an attempt to "demoralize" the elusive enemy. These chemical compounds mixed with the effects of the grim atmospheric conditions and served to unhinge minds even further — mass riots occurred in most populations centers, and the War ended within the year as most nations desperately regrouped their forces and turned their attention inward, searching for ways to control, subdue, and protect their citizens. Only a few ancestral enemies — China and Japan, France and Germany, the Arab states and Israel — continued fighting, and these countries all but demolished one another, flailing blindly until only ruins remained.

The United States passed laws requiring psychiatric counseling for those diagnosed as mentally unsound, and launched a massive campaign to encourage general counseling and rehabilitation. This did not work, primarily due to people's capacity for self-denial, and in 2008 the U. S. declared martial law and began to identify those citizens who were "afflicted" and subject them to mandatory counseling and even incarceration. In 2009 the process began of relocating such citizens to New York City, which had been evacuated after it had been bombed two years before and had lain deserted since. New York was now refitted as a gigantic walled mental institution, a process that took less than a year thanks to the decision not to clear out the old buildings. The complex, renamed the New York Ward or Ny-Ward, was quickly filled to capacity, and several other Wards were hurriedly opened around the country.

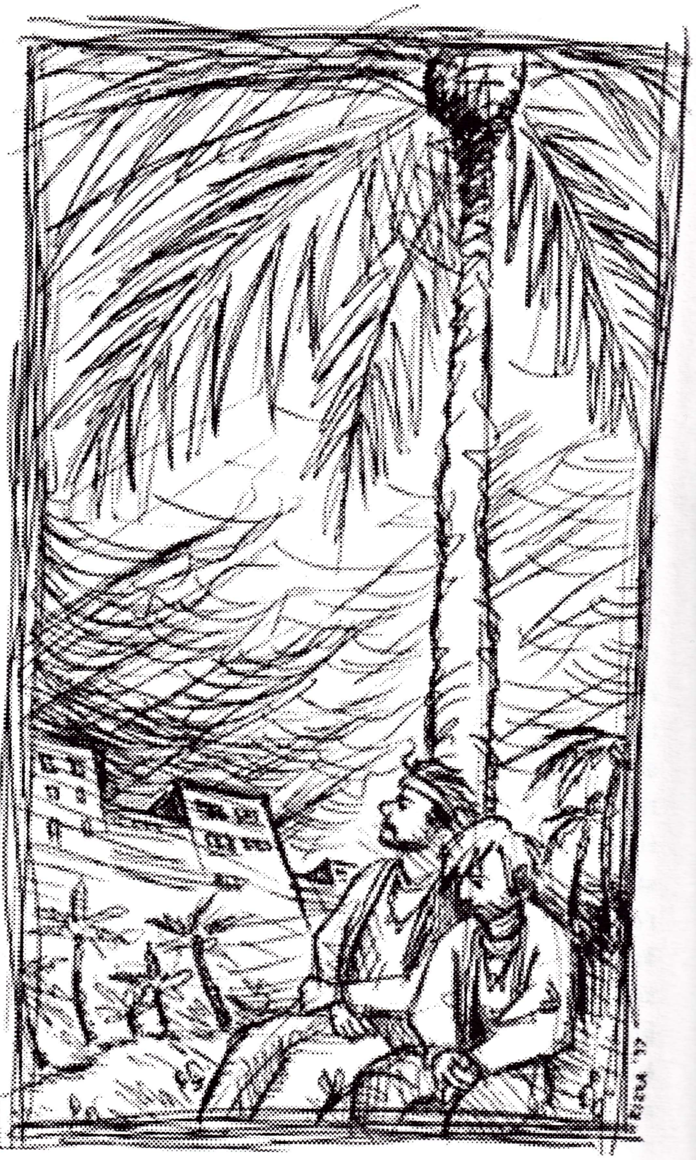
It took twenty-five years to acknowledge defeat, but in 2034 the United States government finally admitted to itself that there were no longer any "unaffected" U. S. citizens, including members of the government itself. The other countries that had survived the War were still busy rebuilding themselves and refused to lend aid to outsiders, and so the United States was faced with the fact that they could not hope to cure themselves, and that in their current state of mind most citizens were not fit to be allowed personal freedom, for fear of injury to themselves and others. The American way of life was essentially no longer viable, and the United States effectively disbanded. Before ceding power, however, steps were taken to

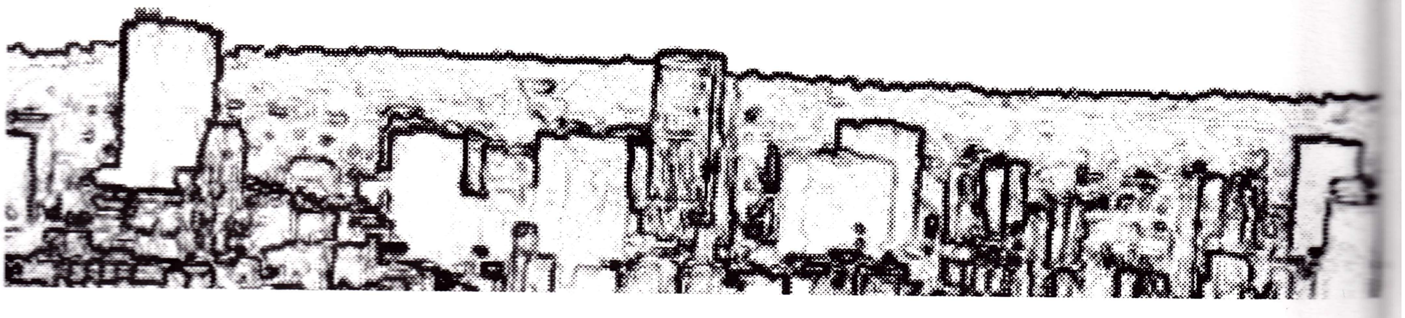


insure the survival and (as far as could be managed) the well-being of the population: a train-based distribution method was established, using unmanned electric trains to deliver regular shipments of food, clothing, and medicine to each Ward, and a hierarchy was also developed to ensure the regularity and stability of such distribution. Then the United States ceased to exist — the country was unofficially renamed Asylum, theoretically because it still offered asylum to "the weary and the downtrodden," but in reality because it had now become one vast asylum — for the insane.

The Environment

Because of the lack of direct sunlight, the world's ecosphere has altered quite drastically. There is still a diurnal cycle, because indirect sunlight still filters through the algae, brightening the world to a warm haze instead of the gray fog of nighttime. The old methods of telling time (hours, days, weeks, months, years) are still used, although very few have clocks or watches and with the sun itself unseen behind the floating plants it is now far more difficult to distinguish between such things as one-thirty and four o'clock. The Blanket Seed traps heat, moisture, fungi and other airborne particles, rendering the climate hotter and more humid, and the air almost unbearably heavy. Cold and snow and ice are all-but-unheard-of below the former Canadian border. Because of this — and the added thermal heat found in populated areas — fog is a familiar Ward presence in all its variations, from light tendrils that drift over the landscape to thick, almost tangible blankets that swathe the world in blurry grays. Outside of the Wards and the ruins, however, fog is not a problem, because the wind is fiercer — there is no longer vegetation to block it — and one's throat coats quickly with dust.





One of the most unsettling, if not terribly dangerous, features of the new world is caused by a bizarre side-effect of the Blanket Seed's' adaptation — the mature plants are inflammable, but when they produce spores those chemicals that let them resist the heat are siphoned off into the new plants. The heat in the upper atmosphere, where the infra-red rays are far more intense, is extreme, and the drained plants have a tendency to burst into flame. Since the Blanket Seed reproduces in large clusters, this results in a vague cloud of algae forming in the sky, drifting slightly lower than the general cover, and then bursting into flames. The explosion causes an updraft, sucking up nutrients from the air and propelling them and the new spores back up into the upper atmosphere, and then small burning plant cinders drop to the surface below. This occurs in any given area perhaps six or seven times a year, at unpredictable intervals.

The other disturbing factor of the Blanket Seed is that, unlike a traditional cloud cover, the algae spores are all alive, and so are constantly moving about (individually, as opposed to the slow drift of sections of cloud). From below, this is almost impossible to see, but it does create a slight crawling sensation in the sky, which tends to make one shiver uncontrollably if one stares at it for too long.

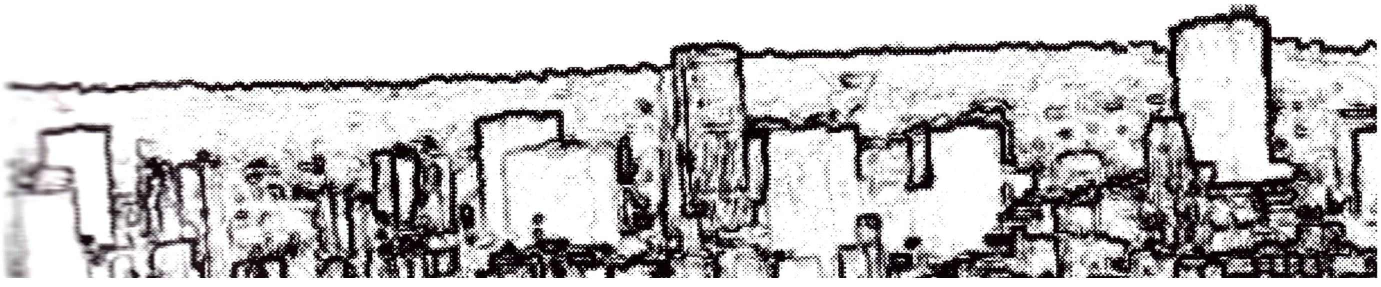
Botany

Almost all ground-based plant life dwindled and died immediately following the eruptions in 2003, from the heavy ash content in the air — the presence of the algae prevented other plants from reestablishing themselves. Those plants protected in such artificially illuminated places as Fields survived intact, and so did lichen, ground creepers, mushrooms (some of which are discussed more thoroughly in Pill-Popping, page 59), and other plants that don't need a great deal of light.

Botanists scrambled to hybridize new plants, believing that the world would soon be in desperate need of more oxygen sources. Their fears actually proved to be unfounded, as the Blanket Seed provides more than enough oxygen to survive, but one of the new creations proved to be viable anyway. It was dubbed the Parasol tree, because it has a tall trunk like a thinner version of the palm, but broader leaves to soak up the minute amount of sunlight that filters down. These trees can now be found lining the outside of the walls in most Wards, sometimes growing wild in the Wastelands, and planted atop old buildings inside the Wards themselves — these rooftop plots are guarded heavily by Orderlies, and no one is allowed near them except the Staff who are assigned to water them daily. There are no more flowers of any sort, and the only fruit trees or vegetables are in Fields and similar places.

Zoology

The animal world was also severely depleted by the disaster — in part from the lack of light, in part from the human

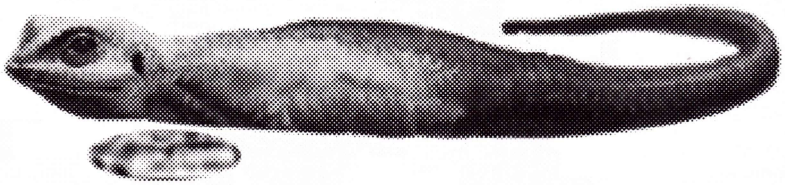


chaos that ensued, and in part because the same chemical agents that rendered many people sterile had a similar effect on some of their biological cousins. Dogs still exist, roaming the Wastelands and sometimes even the Wards in wild packs, but in such small numbers and usually in such pitiful condition that, when encountered, they are more of a nuisance than a real danger.

However, there is an exception to this. At some point in the past a handful of Orderlies in Massward embarked upon a plan to create guard dogs, and over a period of twelve years they managed, through capture, taming, and careful breeding, to create a new type of dog. They dubbed these creatures "Rocks," which is short for "Rockherders," a corrupted amalgamation of the dogs' supposed heritage —judging from build and coloration, they were originally part German Shepherd and part Rottweiler. These beasts are almost three feet high at the shoulder, broad-shouldered and narrowing only slightly towards their hind legs, with long, wide faces, stiffly pointed ears, and short, mottled black-and-gold coats. Rock puppies were eventually traded to most of the other Wards, and now they are a common, if unwelcome, sight in every Ward — Orderlies often take several Rocks with them to accompany them on their rounds, and the large, fierce dogs are feared by all but the most irrational of the Inmates.

Cats also managed to survive, turning wild as well and now looking more like wildcats and bobcats than the house cats of old — longer hindlegs, longer claws, leaner build, larger ears and teeth. On rare occasions Inmates have responded to an ages-old impulse and attempted to tame a cat, but more often the cats are hunted as a source of fresh meat.

Rats have survived unchanged, as have cockroaches. Mosquitoes and other insects that feed off people are also still alive, but naturally all those that drew nourishment from pollen (bees, for example) are extinct. Spiders still exist, spinning their webs happily in the corners of ruined buildings, and due to the increased humidity flies are more abundant than ever. Birds, however, have all but vanished — the spore-filled air proved too dense for the lighter ones to fly through, and the stronger ones found themselves without any sort of prey to sustain them. Worms and grubs, however, are abundant, thriving on the damp heat.

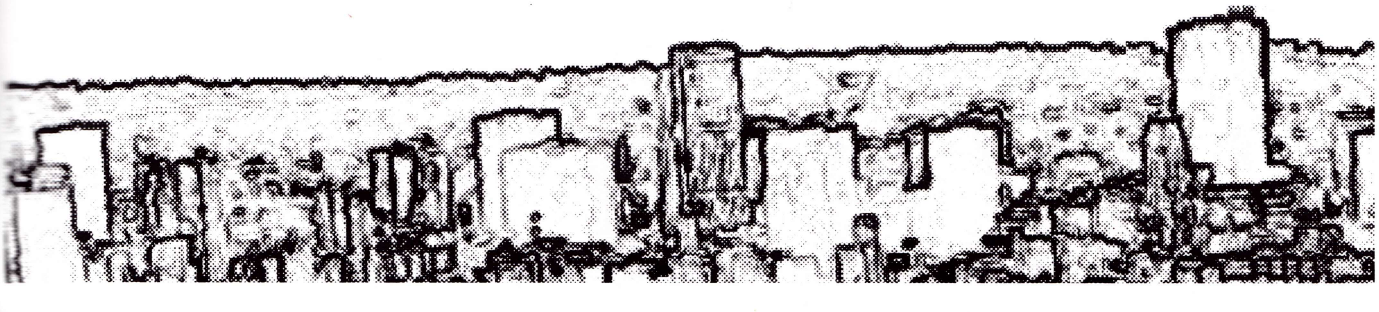


Trapper Snake

In Fields, there are still chickens, cows, and sheep, all essentially unchanged — there are rumored to be horses as well, but since nothing horse-related is ever distributed to the Wards there is no direct evidence of their existence. There are also grains, vegetables, and fruits produced there, which is why the area is kept under strict control and very heavily guarded.

Of course, not every creature has remained the same — many have altered to better match their new environment. Snakes , for example, have had to find new ways to surprise their prey, now that most of the protective vegetation is gone. Most of them have taken on the coloration of the sandy dirt in the Wastelands or, for those in the Wards, of gray stone and cement, in order to trap their prey more easily, but they've developed other, more devious techniques as well. One particularly lethal variety of snake is the Distractor, whose tail has evolved into a flat diamond-shaped wedge remarkably like its head. When it has located a victim, it slowly moves in, its long body spread out in a rough circle, and then it raises its tail and waves it vigorously back and forth, just as a normal snake might moves its head, causing the intended victim to jump back — and, since the whole snake is more than eight feet long, the real head then strikes you as you run towards it. The problem is that, in terms of shape and coloration, the Distractor resembles several other snakes, so you can never be sure if you're dealing with a real head or a fake one, and there isn't usually time to check.

Perhaps the most dangerous snake, however, is the Trapper, which is by far the most intelligent type of snake in Asylum (and probably ever). At some point the Trapper adopted the practice of choosing a small, oblong or triangular piece of metal from its surroundings and then using that as bait, setting the metal out on the ground and then rubbing up against it repeatedly, slowly producing a shine as the creature's rough skin acts as a polisher. When it feels the vibrations of someone approaching, it retreats to a shadow or crevice a few feet away and waits for its victim to walk by and pause to examine the would-be prize, then strikes while the target is distracted. Trappers are highly poisonous, and their venom can render a grown man unconscious in two minutes and kill him in ten, after which the snake nudges the body gradually into a secluded area and begins to feast. Because of the constant polishing and the initial shape, the bait takes on an appearance similar to a bullet, and because of that, and the fact that Trappers are only found inside Wards (perhaps because that is where both scraps of metal and large enough targets are most readily available), their prey is almost exclusively human. If this is deliberate, they would be the only animal known to deliberately hunt humans, and some think that the short (three feet



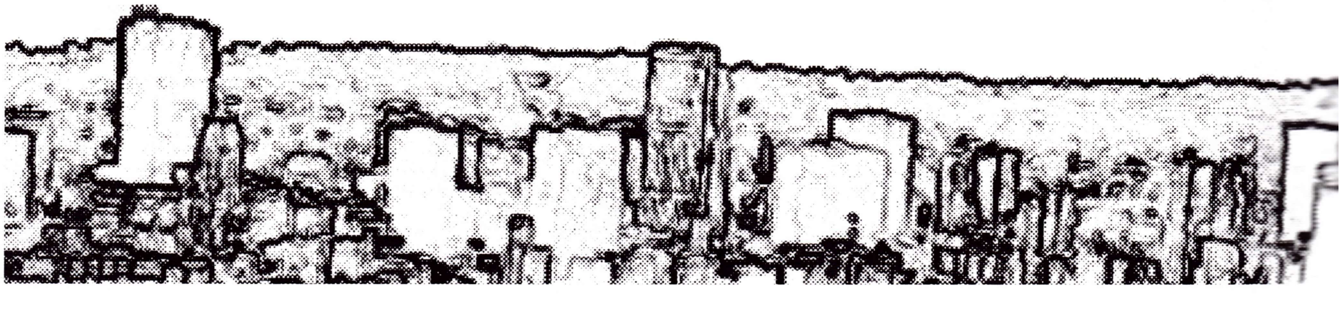
at their longest) thick greenish-gray creatures are not originally snakes at all, but mutated lizards of some sort.

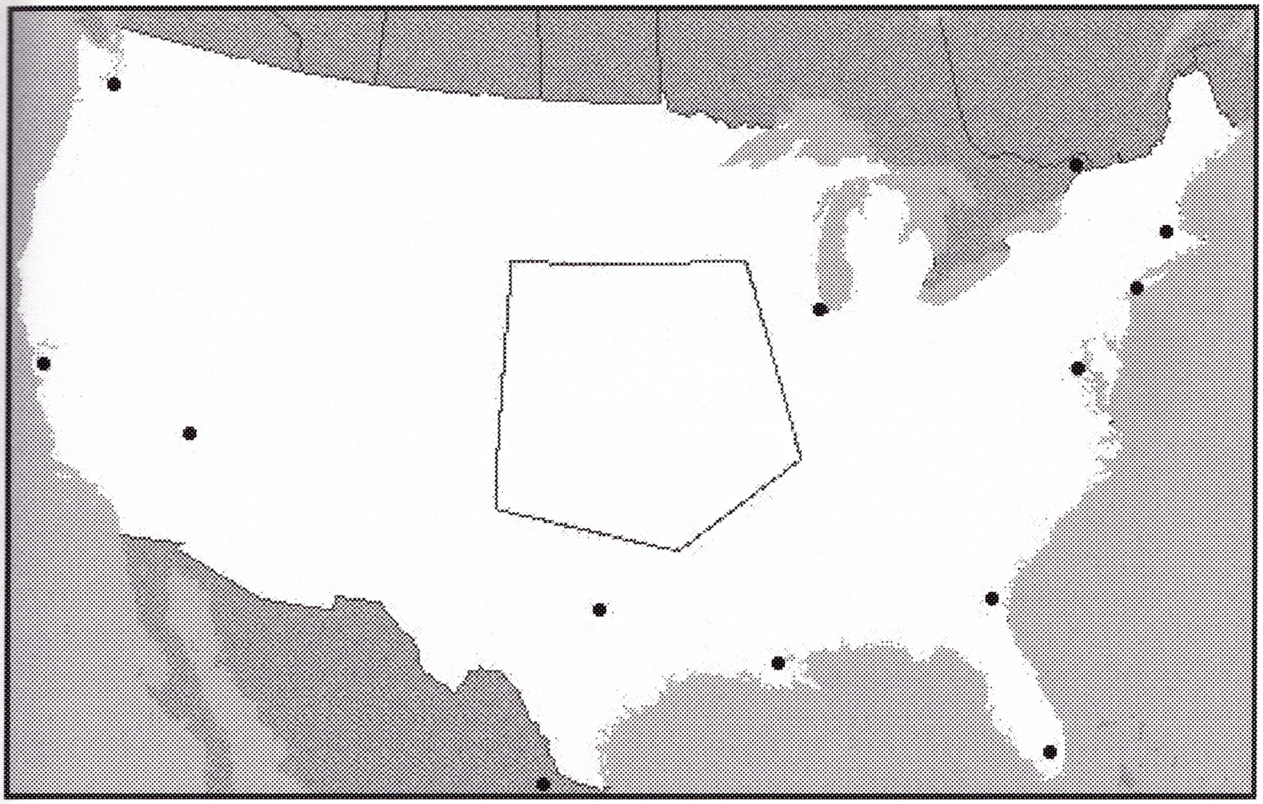
Fish have adapted by reverting to forms from much earlier, even prehistoric times. In the rivers and oceans they tend to be larger, slower, and far less colorful, often pale from the dark waters that block out even the limited light, and they have sharp piranha-like teeth and horned ridges protecting their body. Almost all of them are carnivores now, and they prey on one another viciously. No other form of marine life has been seen in years — no dolphins, no whales, and of course no seabirds. There are rumors that gigantic man-eating fish, the size of old school busses, rule the seas, but few have ever had the opportunity, or the courage, to find out.

Of course, not every creature in Asylum is simply a mutation of the old. More than a hundred years have passed without the sun, and new species have evolved — animals who are better adapted to the ever-present shadows and lack of foliage. One of the most visible of these has been dubbed the Skywhale — there is a legend that this name was taken from an old novel a Scribe once read, but more likely it was simply seen as an apt description of the creature. Skywhales are large, bulbous creatures who are actually more closely related to insects than to whales. They drift across the sky, held aloft by the heavier air, the wind, and the lighter-than-air gasses in their vast stomachs, grazing on minute mold particles in much the way that baleen whales grazed on minute marine creatures. Skywhales are not at all dangerous, because they are slow-moving, generally inactive (they drift into their food and through it, and seem to take no notice of direction or speed, only showing signs of animation when encountering others of their own kind), and apparently unintelligent, and also because their permanently-open mouths are constructed in such a way that only tiny particles, small enough to be easily digested, can pass into their systems. They are also so lightweight that a collision with one would be as likely to send the Skywhale rebounding as to knock the human involved off his or her feet. The creatures are fascinating to watch, with their bulky bodies wandering lazily about in the air and the bright splotches that seem to shift across their skins, but they are not often seen by people. Skywhales rarely drift over the Wards — it has been suggested that the concentration of Inmates gathered in such a place causes a thermal updraft, which blocks the Skywhale's progress and causes them to veer off around the area altogether. It is far more likely to see them out on the horizon, a languid splash of color against a grim, swirling sky.

Asylum

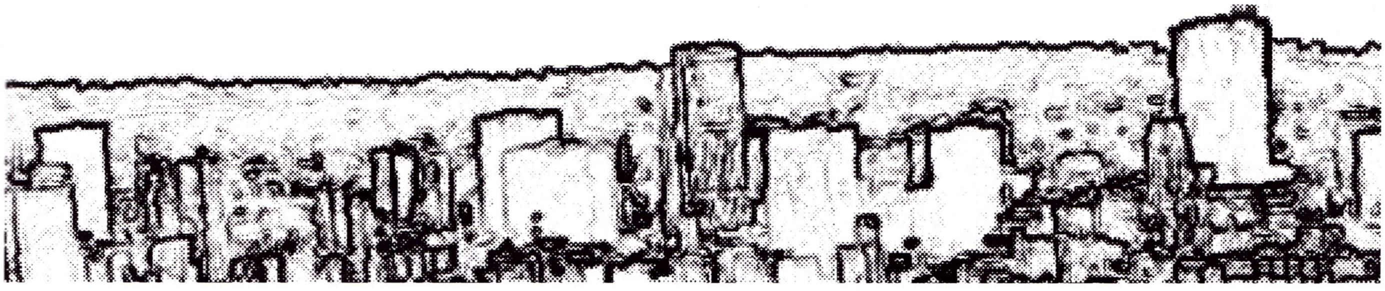
The country is divided into three types of places: Fields, the Wards, and the Wastelands. Fields occupies the center of the country, where most of the Midwest used to be, and the only people inside are specific Staff (farmers and animal handlers) — no one else is allowed in, and there is an entire contingent of Orderlies





stationed there whose only job is to patrol the outside walls of Fields and prevent trespassers. Wards are vast walled cities, each run by its own Warden and policed by its own Orderlies, and it is in them that 95% of the remaining population resides. Outside the Wards, in the space between, lie the Wastelands: dreary stretches of desert, rock, crumbled former cities and abandoned highways. Only the lawless and the desperate live here, and they survive by ambushing the supply trains that leave Fields for the Wards each month. In theory, anyone is free to leave the Wards and anyone who reaches a Ward should be offered shelter. In practice, however, the Orderlies hate and fear outsiders and will try to dispose of them, and "it is too unsafe to allow anyone to leave the Ward without a proper escort" (which translates to mean that the Orderlies enjoy their position of power too much to willingly allow Inmates to leave their domain). Of course, most Inmates have no desire to leave anyway. Because of the distribution system, however, anyone who makes it into a Ward undetected can survive there as long as they don't call too much attention to themselves.

There are fourteen Wards in all, and each one is built from a former North American city. A few of them, specifically Diskward and Ny-Ward, were heavily bombed during the War and have large areas still in ruins, but most of the Wards are basically intact, considering how long they have been standing, and many of the old buildings are still in use.



The Wards (and their former city names)

Atward: Atlanta
Diskward: Washington, D. C.
IllWard: Chicago
La Ward: Los Angeles
Massward: Boston
McWard: Mexico City
Mount Ward: Montreal
My Ward: Miami
Ny-Ward: New York City
No-Ward: New Orleans
Stillward: Seattle
Stoneward: Houston
Toward: Toronto
The V-Word: Las Vegas

Lingo

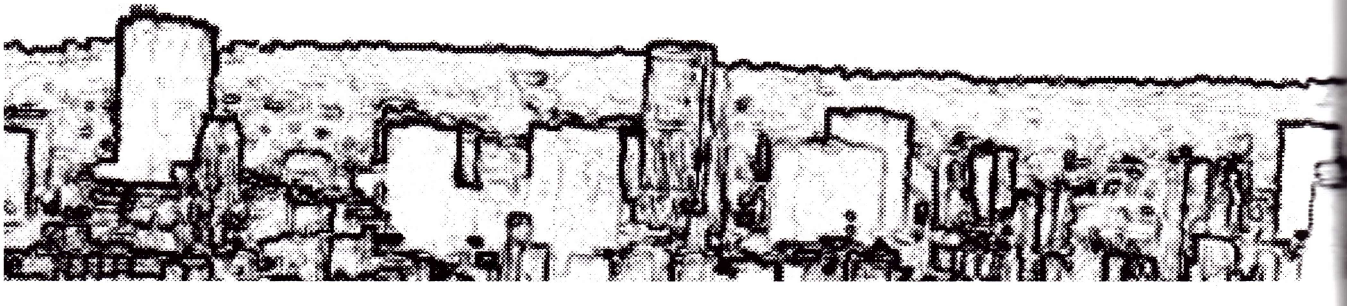
According to gossip, every continent in the world is now some sort of burnt-out husk or a vast institution like Asylum itself, but of course no one can be sure — without phone lines or any sort of mail service, communication only reaches across a single Ward, and often not even that far. But the Inmates at Asylum have devised their own terms for various items and activities, and use them in their everyday conversations.

The Other Continental Institutions

Europe: Sanitare
Great Britain: The Cloister
Asia: The Rock Garden
Africa: The Darkroom
South America: The Monkey House
Australia: The Nuthouse
Antarctica: as far as anyone knows, no one lives here — even Inmates aren't that crazy!

Asylum Lexicon:

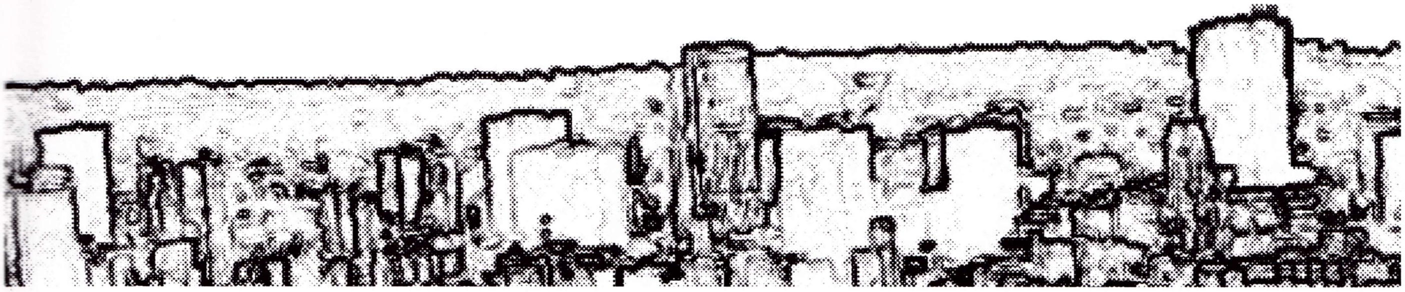
Almanacs: information brokers
Beltway: an aerial network of ropes, ladders, and walkways used as transportation through the Ward
Bullets: a form of currency, based on 9mm ammunition
Clinic, The: where Ward-certified Doctors, Nurses, and Shrinks work and see to Staff and occasionally Inmates
Crafters: craftsmen (plumbers, carpenters, bricklayers)
Dead End: the Ward crematorium
Doctors: Ward-certified healers who work at the Clinic
Doses: a form of currency, based on 250mg Valiums
Dose Day, or D-Day: Sunday, the day Doses are handed out
Fields: the walled area in the middle of the country where food is grown
Fieldhands: the fabled workers of Fields, who raise the animals and tend the plants
Fixers: drug dealers
Guards: the Orderlies who maintain the outer walls of the Ward
House of Solitude, The: a prison for trouble-makers, maintained by the Orderlies — Inmates who go into the House rarely come out
Inmates: the people who live in Asylum; the term is often used for anyone



who isn't Staff
Laundry Day: the second Saturday of the month, when clothing is handed out
Lounge, The: a large building devoted to recreational activities for the Inmates
Lunatic Fringe: the primitive groups that live just outside the walls of the Wards (individuals are called Lunatics)
Mall, The: an open area set aside for the buying, selling, and trading of goods and services
Nurses: medical Staff who assist Doctors in the Clinic
Offices: the complex in a Ward where the Warden and his/her Staff live and work
Orderlies: the police force inside a Ward
Patches: non-Clinic doctors
Rocks: big nasty dogs the Orderlies take with them on patrol
Rounds: weapons dealers
Scribes: historians
Sharks: gamblers, specifically those who run the games in the Lounge or at the Mall
Sharks' Den, The: the portion of the Lounge which Sharks set aside for their games
Shrinks: Clinic doctors who specialize in psychological "testing" and other "experiments"
Squads: the standard five-Orderly formations which patrol within the Ward
Staff: all Ward workers in general; also, the non-military and non-medical personnel — the ones who clean and repair and load, etc.
Tinkers: inventors — usually part mechanic, part electrician, and part sculptor
Tunes: musicians
Tugs: boat pilots (and, in the Wastelands, the almost-mythical bus driver)
Ward: the city-state where Inmates live
Warden: the man or woman in charge of the Ward
Wastelands, The: the lifeless areas surrounding and separating the Wards
Weavers: clothing makers of all sorts.

Daily Routine

The year is now 2163. The trains still run on time, and every day at 8 am shipments of food are delivered at the first station of each Ward, which is the one nearest to Offices. The trains then move on outward to the next station, spaced exactly an hour away, and then across to the third station, another hour apart, and so on. The food consists of processed meat, canned vegetables, canned fruits, bread, soup, cereal, candy, juice, water, all wrapped in small paper cartons or plastic containers — cafeteria food. Each packet contains enough food for an average Inmate to eat for an entire day, whether they wish to devour everything at once or ration it out more carefully. Not only are drugs now legal, but every Sunday a pill is given out with the meal, a Valium — because of this, Sundays are sometimes jokingly referred to as "Dose Days" or "D-Days." On the second Saturday of every month (which is rather cryptically referred to as "Laundry Day") the train delivers cloth-



ing as well — shirts and pants, shoes and hats, gloves and jackets and blankets. The trains are loaded and unloaded by general Staff and protected by the Orderlies, the police force of each Ward.

Money in terms of coin or bill has ceased to exist — all trades are done in values of "bullets" or "doses." Bullets are all 9mm, because during the War every gun was converted to that specification — antiques still exist that fire other calibers, but they are difficult to find and the ammunition even more so. The dose that is used is the 250mg Valium pill that is distributed once a week from the trains. Bullets and guns are occasionally handed out by the Orderlies, theoretically for protection purposes but more likely just for sadistic amusement, and are precious commodities. Other items that are in demand are food, clothing, drugs, and information.

There are no more cars or planes, or at least no working ones. The bodies of some vehicles still lie in the streets, but after over one hundred and fifty years of disuse they are little more than shells, and even if they were functional there is no gas to be found anywhere. Rumor has it that some Wardens still have access to working planes and motorboats, and that there are tankers filled with gas for their use, but no Inmate has ever seen one. In those Wards near the water, only rowboats and sailboats remain. There are also no phones anymore — Orderlies carry walkie-talkies.

Electricity still exists and, although a bit shaky in the more run-down areas of the Wards, it is usually reliable. It is produced by vast generators in each Ward — turbines and waterwheels in the harbor Wards and wind turbines for those near hills and mountains — and there are even rumors of windmills and geothermal batteries near Fields. Many of the old buildings still have working lights in them, and Inmates often take refuge in such places. Running water also still functions in most of the buildings.

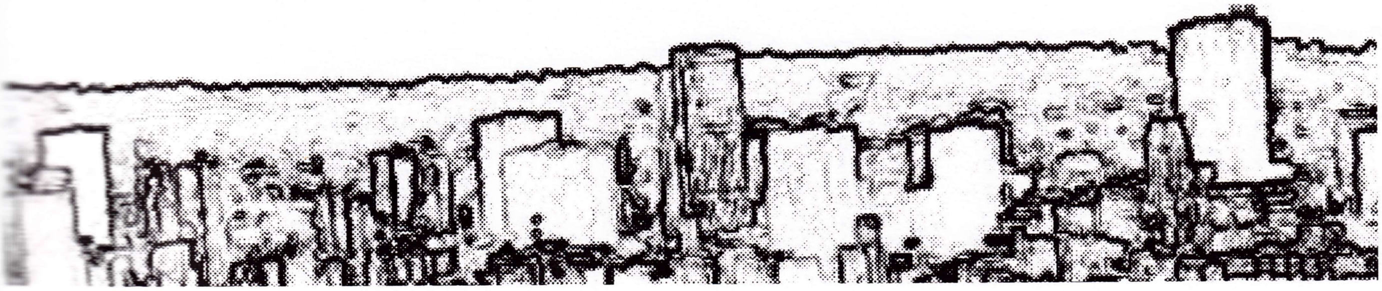
Computers are a thing of the past, mainly because the humidity is so lethal to circuits that, by the time the War was over, virtually no working components were left. Without the factories to create new materials, there is no way to get such devices running again. Most technology has returned to a vacuum-tube level, although over the years they have been miniaturized a bit — tubes are far more durable, and less affected by temperature and moisture. Of course, this means that most post-disaster devices cannot interface with those few pre-disaster relics that remain, due to different systems. However, most of the old devices that were deemed important (such as monitoring systems, broadcast systems, locking systems) have been reproduced. Some tinkers still experiment with circuitry, because chips are smaller and more versatile, but unless the devices they create are completely sealed they will eventually grow damp and moldy and cease to function.

Books, of course, continue to survive — not the cheap mass-market paperbacks, whose glue barely stood up to mild dampness before disintegrating, but solidly-made hardbacks have held up against the ravages of time, especially those older books whose paper contained linen and cotton (rather than strictly pulp) and whose binding was as much cloth and thread as glue. The problem is that most books are still trapped in ruined libraries and bookstores, and also that, although the outer book itself might still be whole, in many cases the ink has faded from adverse conditions. Most Inmates do know how to read basic things, however, and Scribes are always searching for old tomes that still contain legible material. There are, after all, still some very valuable things to be found in old books, such as medical techniques, scientific devices, wiring diagrams, strategies . . . .

The Inmates

Due to the chemical agents introduced during the war, 60% of the current population is sterile. This number is falling gradually, as those who can still reproduce do so and the genetic flaw becomes more and more recessive, but it is a slow process, and the population is dwindling every year. Currently, there are roughly twenty-five million Inmates. However, for some reason, the mixture of chemicals, regulated food, and sunlight deprivation has had as positive a physical effect as a negative psychological one — people are mentally unstable, but they are more constitutionally sound, and such minor illnesses as colds and flus are virtually unknown.

Average life span is around 50



years — medicine has advanced enough to keep people hale and hearty for up to 90, but the lack of sunlight, harsh living conditions, and everyday risks reduce that significantly. All racial types still exist, particularly in Asylum — there have not been enough generations without the sun for the racial amounts of melanin (skin pigmentation) to fade, although increased interbreeding has muted and merged many of the more typical physical characteristics of individual races. English is still the language commonly used, although some people from strong cultural backgrounds still teach their ancestral tongue to their children. Actually, after society fell, virtually all of the more traditional biases (race, gender, sexual orientation, religion) disappeared, because people were suddenly more concerned about banding together for protection than they were about claiming superiority over someone else for superficial reasons. There are only two kinds of people now — those you can trust and those you can't. Distinguishing between the two has nothing to do with outer appearance, and no one's classification can be taken for granted — not even your own.

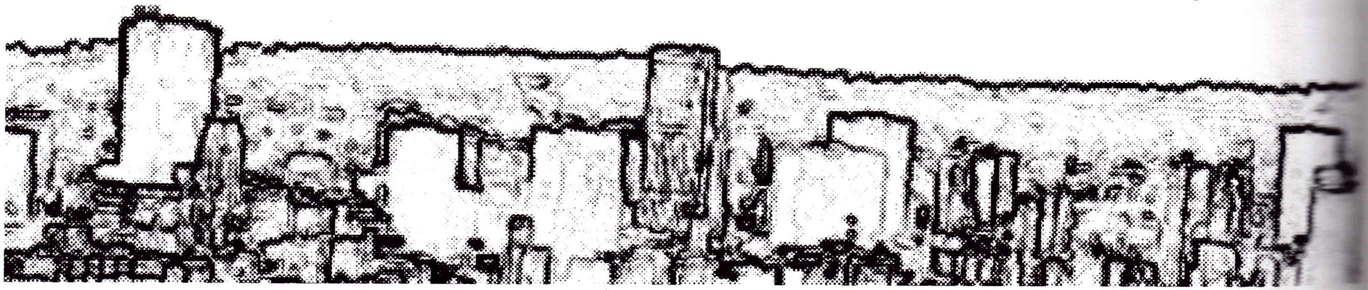
There are two types of Inmates — those with Occupations and those without. Those with Occupations seem to be a bit more balanced, probably because their jobs help them focus more clearly and keep their minds off potentially alarming notions and situations. No one actually needs to work, of course, provided they can get to the train platform every day — the food that the Orderlies drop off is typical institutional fare, and no one considers it worth stealing or hoarding. But boredom can often be a problem, and finding ways to pass the time sometimes requires, or leads to, some rather unusual activities and practices.

The Strait and Narrow

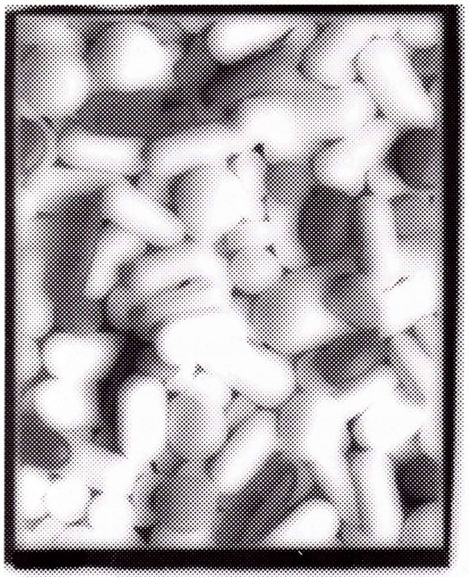
The supply trains regularly dispense clothes of an institutional sort — durable, plain, and one size fits all (in most cases). The usual items are smock-like shirts, sturdy work pants, undergarments (it's amusing what vestiges a fallen civilization will cling to), canvas shoes and caps, and cotton gloves. But the most visible garment among Inmates, the symbol for everything Asylum has become, is the strait jacket.

Originally invented in the nineteenth century and widely used in the early twentieth, this restraint fell out of favor several decades before the War. But it continued to appear in isolated cases, and when the first Ward was born the strait jacket was brought back into use. Its durability and warmth, as well as its potential to restrain the wearer during dangerous moments, made it a natural choice for Inmate outerwear — the only change that was made in the essential structure was to cut open the sleeves and hem the cuffs, so that the hands could protrude. And the Inmates themselves found the jackets appealing, for much the same reasons — in Asylum the weather is mild enough that more than a jacket is usually not required, and sometimes it is good to be able to be tied down.

Of course, individual changes are often made — Inmates are nothing if not



individualistic, and the strait jacket often becomes a focus for repressed creativity. Many wear the jacket backwards, so that it opens in front like the jackets of old, and a few have either cut off the sleeves to wear the garment vest-style or sewed on additional material for a longer coat. Epaulets are common, to allow Inmates to hang chains and other pendants over the arms; the straps extending from the sleeves are excellent ties for knives and other weapons, keeping them in easy reach. Some clever Weavers and Tinkers managed to create dies and paints, and so many jackets bear designs or names or images blazoned across them, while others have swatches of fabric sewn on or metal plates and spikes jutting forth. Respect is given to those with the most elaborate or creative or ostentatious jacket.

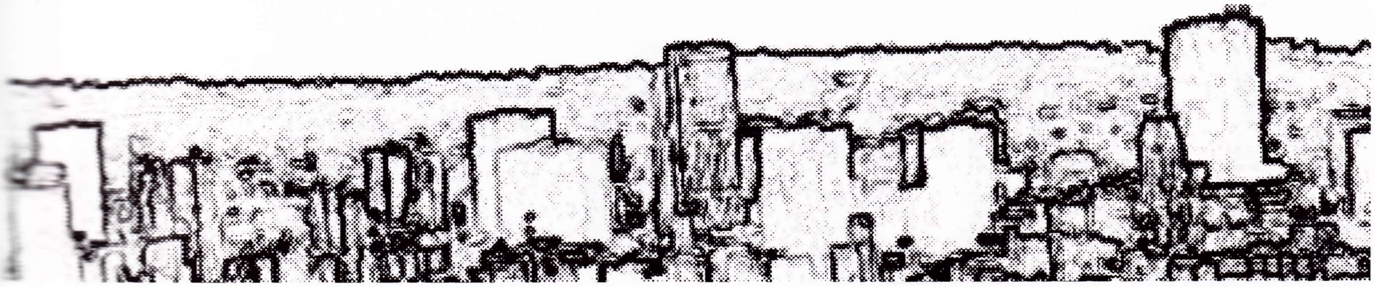


Street gangs often design their jackets around a similar theme. Fixers and Tinkers often sew extra pockets onto their jackets, to hold small items — Rounds and Patches do too, although the extra pockets Rounds use tend to be larger pouches, to hold guns. Every jacket is different. One of the unspoken rules in any Ward is "Never steal another Inmate's straitjacket," and to deliberately deface someone's jacket is an insult that demands blood combat. Even the Orderlies know better than to mess with this rule — some have tried it, tearing an Inmate's jacket or splashing paint on it, and have been mobbed by every Inmate in sight.

Keeping Faith

Religion was once described as the opiate of the masses, and in Asylum the Inmates need all the opiates they can get, to distract them from the harsh realities of the ruined world around them. There are, however, some problems involved.

Religion is based on three things: a consistent oral or written tradition, the faith of its followers, and a series of regular meetings. Thanks to the vast amount of free time most Inmates have, there is more than enough opportunity for each new religion to have its entire history, theory, and pattern of worship scribed by eager hands — many new religious texts are spoken of but have never been seen anywhere and may only exist in the imagination of the author. Faith is also not a problem — an Inmate who is capable of believing that he or she can fly or see through walls or that the man with the green hat is a dragon in disguise is more than ready to accept the notion that such-and-such a person is a divine Savior, and that there is a better (or worse, depending) world waiting



after this one.

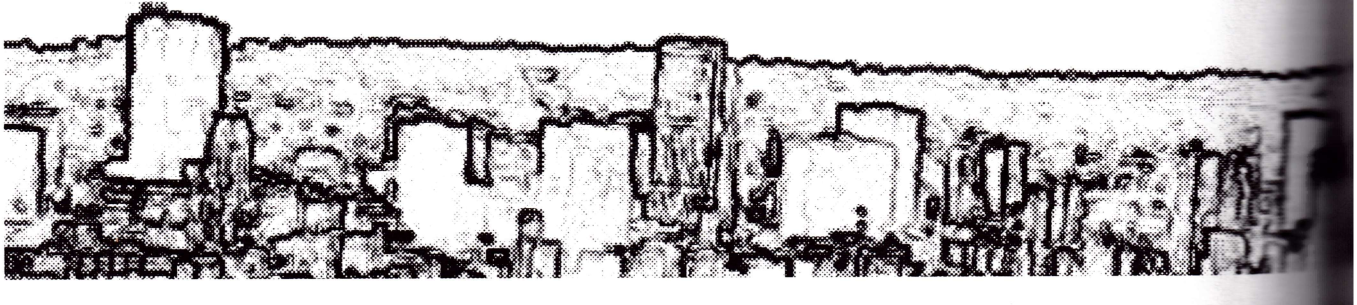
Consistency, however, does leave a bit to be desired — the same people who believe that Jesus is our Savior on Monday may think that he was a poser on Tuesday, and have completely forgotten who he is by Thursday. Most Inmates, after all, have difficulty maintaining a single cohesive thought or identity — religious dogma, which is far more complex, has a far slimmer chance of being remembered and accepted intact.

Organized meetings also tend to be difficult for much the same reason. There are more than enough empty buildings, even in the more populous Wards, to provide spacious houses of worship for every religion that desires one. Tracking down Inmates, informing them of a meeting, convincing them to attend — and then trusting them to both remember the meeting and its purpose, still agree with its basic tenets, and have the energy and lucidity to find their way there at the proper time — is asking for far more than even most minor deities can hope to accomplish. Because of this, there are very few organized religions left. For most, religion is an individual matter, and often one that changes from day to day. Those with more consistent interest tend to set up shrines near their own home, open to anyone who wishes to visit and pray, but they only concern themselves with genuine services when enough people show up all at once.

Christianity has managed to survive, in large part due to its message that there is a better life waiting after this one — that is sometimes all that keeps some Inmates going. However, its tenets of peacefulness and nonaggression usually fall by the wayside, because those who do follow such practices, unless they have decidedly less nonaggressive protectors, tend to die off rather quickly, not out of any particular persecution so much as the usual rough life inside a Ward.

Buddhism has also remained, because its belief in rebirth, like Christianity's afterlife, inspires hope that the next time around could be better. There is enough of a caste system in Asylum to sustain such desire for progression and to fit the Buddhist notion of the Karmic Wheel of Rebirth. Being born a Lunatic is the bottom rung of a person's spiritual evolution — as the soul advances it is reborn as Inmate, Orderly, then Warden, and then achieves the ultimate goal of Nirvana as one of the mythical inhabitants of Fields itself. After all, having all of Fields, with its fresh food and "sunshine," at your command, has got to be as good as it gets!

Judaism has struggled to maintain itself, but this has been difficult for a religion based primarily on regular religious services, a tight-knit community, and an emphasis on education and study of the few Torahs that remain. For the most part, individual Jewish Inmates raise their children in that tradition, and leave them to pass their culture on to their children, when the time comes. Judaism's greatest draw for Inmates is its sense of continuity with the past, and its strong history of survival — the Holocaust was, in many ways, far worse for the Jewish people, and if they could make it through that then there is hope that they can survive daily life in the Ward as well.

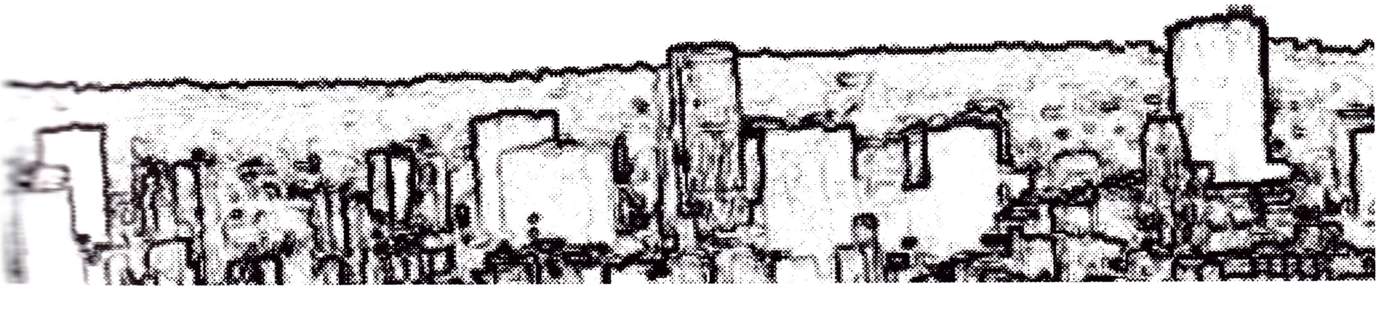


Several other "old" religions still exist — such as Taoism (which assumes that the Way has simply become more cryptic, but that a devout follower may still locate the true path) and Voodoo (since so many Inmates believe that they can fly, or are chickens, or whatever else, belief in magic and in powerful beings that possess others is hardly unusual) — although worship tends to be on a more personal level now, and not an organized one. One of the more surprising resurgences is the Cult of the Sub-Genius, an odd quasi-religious/quasi-philosophical group from the latter 20th Century that believed in an iconic figure named Bob, who was the quintessential "normal" person: a white male, dark-haired and clean-shaven, in early middle age, with strong clean features and a pipe. In Asylum, the Cult has been resurrected, but mainly as a mockery. Bob is seen as a figurehead of the idealized past which stands in perfect contrast to the chaos of the modern world, where no one is truly normal and only those who are truly foolish would ever believe or desire to be so. Many street gangs profess a genuine belief in the Cult's principles, but only so that they can use the "abnormality" of Inmates as an excuse to attack them. These principles are also a factor in the existence of the Eugenecists (see page **28**), although they consider the Sub-Genius cult members to be "underachievers," willing to settle for normality instead of striving for superiority.

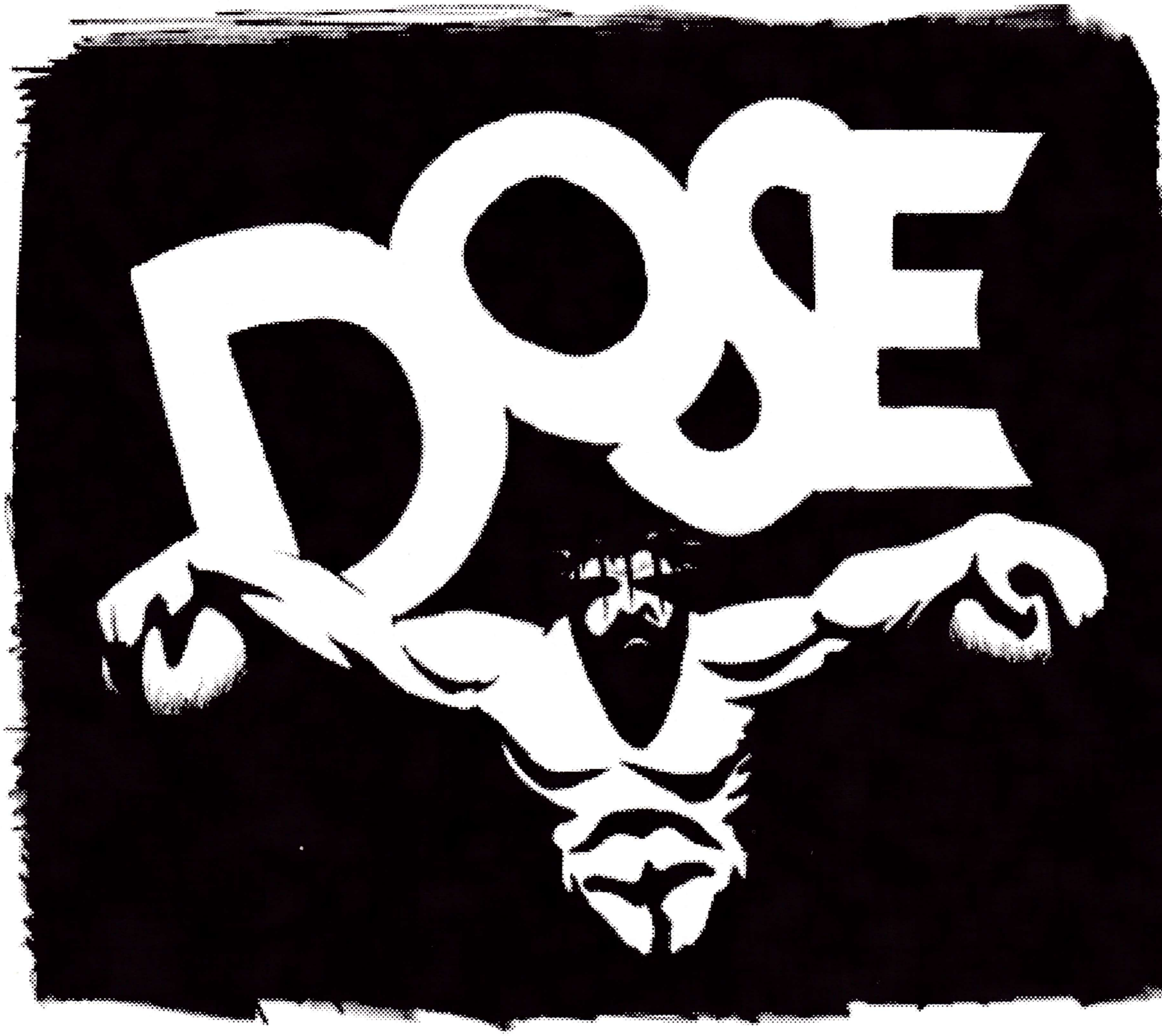
There are new religions that have gained some currency, as well. Most Wards have had at least one Messianic figure appear at some point in their history, which is hardly surprising considering the number of Narcissists and Megalomaniacs about. Most of these figures, however, fade into obscurity fairly quickly, and very few have actual followers after their own death.

One notable exception to this is the case of The Spiritual Descendants of the Green Monkey, a cult which was founded on the teachings of a famous Inmate and has been in existence for more than a hundred years. In the early days just after the War many of the Inmates in the various Wards attempted to convince themselves that they were being wrongly persecuted, that they were "sane" and simply misplaced or misunderstood. Then, in 2026, a Diskward Inmate (formerly a small-town baker by the name of Edward Meyer) stripped off all of his clothes, covered himself from head to toe in thick green paint, and took to scampering about the Ward, climbing buildings and swinging across the rooftops, and calling himself the Green Monkey. He encouraged others to follow his example, not in terms of appearance but in accepting their true nature and reveling in it — there was no point, he claimed, in attempting to pose as something other than what you were, and the strain of pretending was liable to kill you. Instead, acting on deep-seated desires and impulses was at least being true to oneself, and that could not lead to anything but contentment.

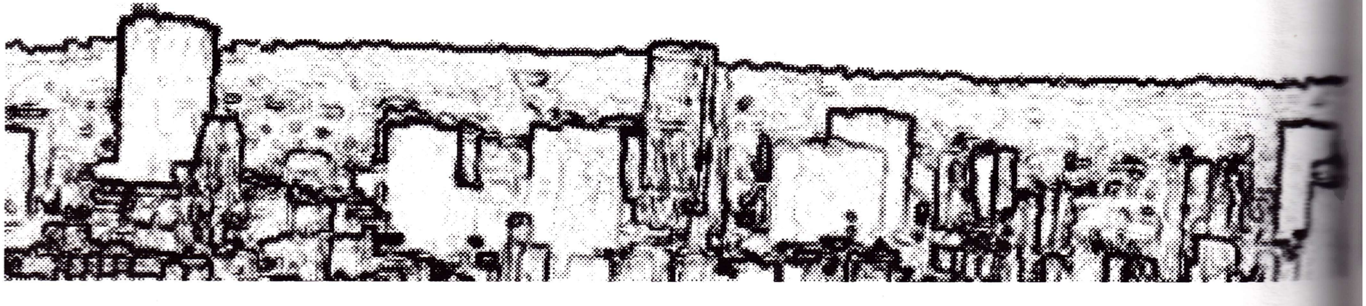
As the Green Monkey's teachings spread, people began to admit more and more that they really were clinically "insane," and instead of attempting to cover up their eccentricities they began



to openly admit to them and even flaunt them. This led to a more comfortable atmosphere inside the Wards — everyone finally admitted that they all deserved to be there. This eventually forced the remnants of the United States government to admit that the entire country belonged in the Wards, leading to the breakdown of the democratic system and the formation of Asylum itself. The Green Monkey is still revered as the first to rejoice in his true freedom from conventional behavior, and most Wards have at least one shrine to him, a place where the walls are painted green and usually padded, and anyone is free to enter and express their individuality. Actual members of the Spiritual Descendants tend to wear small green pendants in the shape of a monkey, or patches with his image on them, and walk the Wards preaching tolerance towards others. In many Wards, they also unofficially patrol the Beltway (see below).



A newer group is known only as the Dosers. Not surprisingly, they center



their religious beliefs, and their lives, around taking Doses. This is not so much a religion as a lifestyle, but they do claim to believe that the state of mind produced by taking a Dose is the plane of existence God actually intended Man to inhabit, and that Doses are simply His way of correcting whatever mistake caused men and women to lose that exalted state. Because of this, Dosers tend to view the Staff as servants of God, and hold them in high reverence — Sundays are, of course, holy. The only form of organization the Dosers have is that they tend to all group together in each Ward — more violent members often take to mugging other Inmates for their doses, while more industrious one practice an Occupation in order to earn more Doses. The Doses are divided equally amongst the members, so that they share the experience. The Orderlies like the Dosers, because they tend to be very respectful towards them, and rarely cause trouble — some Orderlies have even been known to hand out extra Doses, in order to curry favor, and have attained an almost-celestial status in the eyes of the Dosers who benefit from their generosity.

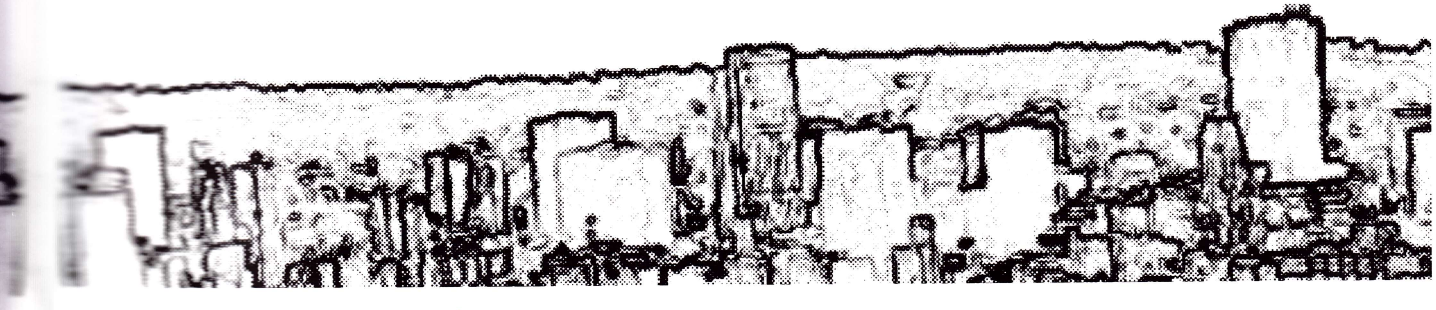
One group that some consider to be a religion is the Cult of Christ, which is discussed fully in Social Life (see page 28). The members of the Cult do not consider themselves a religion, however, because they think of themselves as only different manifestations of a single person, and no one person can make up an entire organization.

Social Life

Most Inmates either fend for themselves or band together with a handful of others for mutual self-protection, but occasionally a more organized group appears, usually with some sort of agenda. Some groups are merely amusing, but others are extremely dangerous because they tend to be very focused, despite, or perhaps because of, their mental instabilities.

The Architects: this is a group of consensual realists — that is, they believe that reality is merely a matter of common opinion, and that it can be changed if enough people can be convinced that it is changed. They go around and rename things (like pointing at a door and calling it "cat") and attempt to convince others — sometimes with logic but usually just through volume and repetition — to agree with them.

The Shallow People: the Wards are filled with narcissists and headliners, people wanting nothing more than to be noticed and admired, but most other Inmates are far too busy with their own concerns to pay attention. The only people who usually care how such people look are those who want others to pay them the same attention. Somewhere along the line, a few of the more intelligent Inmates of this type realized this, and so they formed their own clique, consisting entirely of like-minded Inmates. They tend to gather in clusters to discuss new fashions, which they create and usually only they follow, and they compete with one another to create new fashions and then exemplify them, each member adopting whatever the new fashion of the moment is and trying to adapt it so that it has his/her stamp on

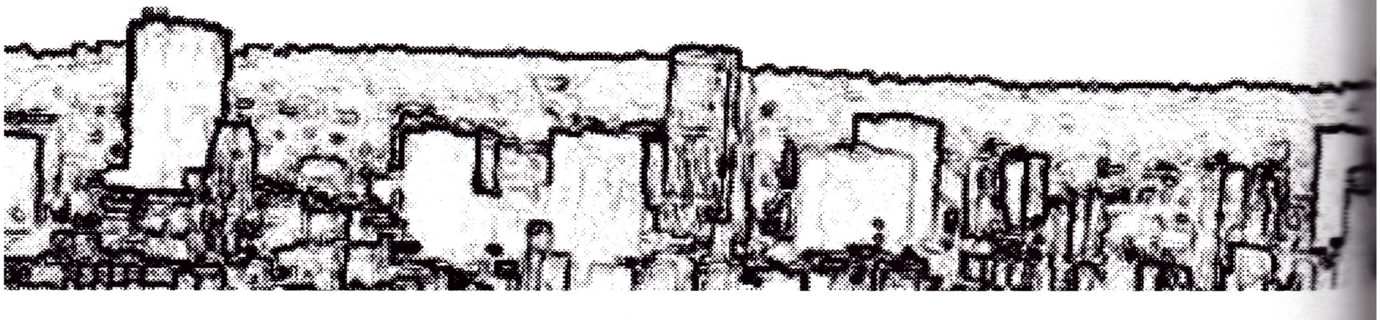


it. Shallow People tend to be rather brutal with one another — they automatically assume that ordinary Inmates have no taste, but their peers are supposed to show some fashion sense, so they mock and insult one another in order to improve their own standing. Of course, they all put up with this, because if they left the clique they wouldn't have anyone to notice them anymore, and even insults are at least a form of (potentially envious) attention. In order to gain entry to this group, an Inmate has to pass a fashion review by the current members, where they are brutally evaluated in terms of not only clothing but height, build, hair, eyes, facial features, posture, speech, and mannerism. If considered to have potential, the Inmate is accepted into the group provisionally — they are not considered a full member until they have created a new fashion (or variant on an old one) that at least two other members find exciting enough to copy.

The Cult of Christ: there have always been people with delusions, people who thought that they were actually someone else, and the favorite for centuries has been Christ. Somehow, at one point, two or more would-be Christs encountered one another and, instead of fighting for the right to the identity, something odd happened — they decided to work together. Now they number close to two hundred in all, spread all across the Wards, and they go about together and preach and pray and bless people and generally get underfoot. Of course, not everyone has the same view of Christ — some are the healer, others the prophet, still others the leader, and a small handful are even the avenger, but they all affect the simple robes, long hair and beard (among the men, at least), and most carry a Bible. The more fanatic even bear large wooden Crosses about on their backs. They are perfectly harmless, and debating with them can actually be an amusing way to spend the afternoon.

The Eugenecists: this is a far more dangerous group, and they have taken over a strip of land between several Wards and turned it into the Eugenics Zone. They think that they are sane, but they're actually all obsessive, and most of them are homicidal, manic, or both. Anyone who enters their area and is caught is tested for mental stability and physical integrity — those who pass are not only given free passage but offered a chance to join the Eugenecists. Anyone who doesn't pass all the tests is considered flawed, and summarily executed.

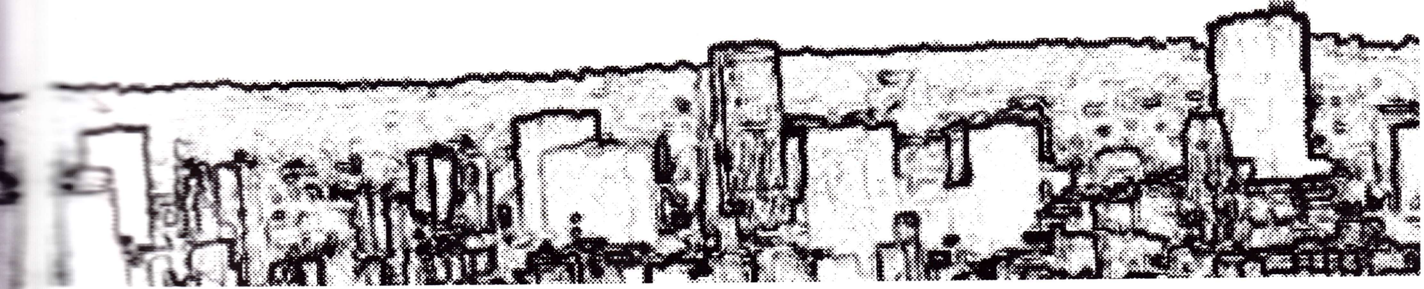
The Factors: this is a maniacal group closely akin to the biker gangs of old. Back around 2145 a woman named 'Lexa discovered an abandoned building with only the word "factor" left on its rusted front. But within was a treasure trove of metal, shaped and formed for one purpose — to make cars. (The building is actually an old Ford factory.) 'Lexa went away and then came back with several friends, and over the next four years they figured out how to assemble the parts and even how to get their creation running on multiple batteries. Almost fifteen years have passed since then, and the Factors (named after the sign that still hangs in front of the building) rule the area between the Northern and Eastern Wards, riding about in their doorless, hoodless jeeps



and vans, raiding small settlements and hijacking supply trains. The Factors do occasionally sneak into nearby Wards for food and clothing, but only when absolutely necessary; they prefer to live on their own means. They are bitter enemies of the Eugenecists, and fights often break out between the two where their territories intersect in the mid-eastern region of Asylum. There are over forty Factors, and they don't take well to outsiders unless a grueling (and bloody) initiation right is passed.

Note that most of the Factors' vehicles are powered by several batteries linked together (one providing the usual function of ignition and the others recharging it while also providing motive power) and so have top speeds around 30 mph. A few innovators have rigged up engines based on methane (available from decomposing food) and can reach up to 55. Sails are frequently used to add velocity. There are a few faster assault vehicles, and no one knows what they run on — one theory is that the Factors have made some sort of deal with the nearby Wardens, and have received a supply of actual gasoline in exchange . . . .

The Knights Errant: this is "a Fellowship of medieval knights who have banded together in search of noble adventure." They are all Psychotic, of course, and, because if there are any horses left they are safely ensconced in Fields, they are all on foot. Most members of this troupe wear some semblance of armor — either a former museum piece of a cobbled-together facsimile — and they all carry sword and shields with their personal coats of arms laboriously traced out. The Knights often hold jousts, and anyone is invited to participate, but even most Inmates are wise enough to stay well out of reach. The Knights can be convinced to aid characters if they are told that it is some sort of grand adventure, and despite their lunacy and their anachronism they are fairly handy to have in a fight.



They will also invite any other "Knight" they meet to prove his worth against them in combat, and if he is worthy (i.e., not dead) afterwards they will invite him to join them — there is only one female Knight, Britomart, and she was allowed into the group only after she had trounced all of the others in battle.

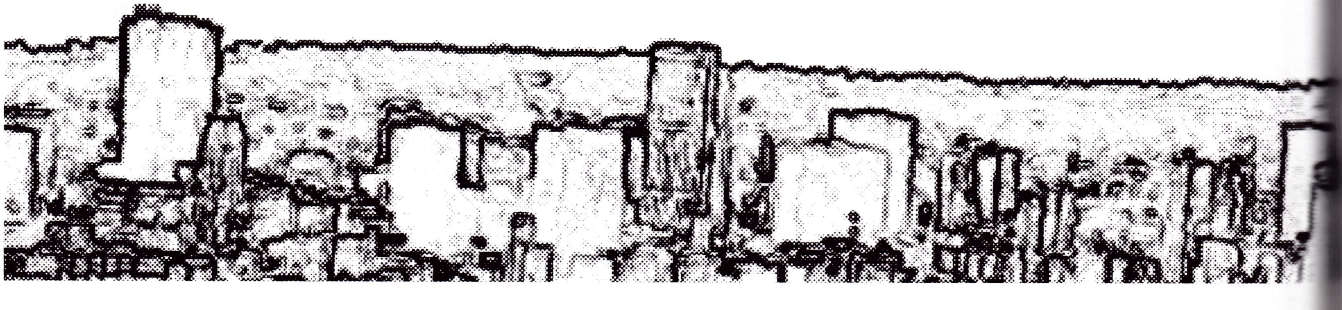
The 'Shroom Syndicate: this is a collection of Fixers who all sell Liquid Blue (see Pill-Popping, pg. 59), both in single shots from their own bottles and in whole bottles (to those who can afford them). They all wear some article of clothing that has been dyed the brilliant blue of the Baby Blue mushroom, and they all look out for each other's interests. Other Fixers occasionally sell Liquid Blue, but anyone who is not in the Syndicate and who starts selling it regularly will be visited by a few of the "members," and will be invited to join them. If the Fixer chooses to join, he or she will be expected to take on the Syndicate's colors and to contribute a small share of the profits to the organization (the money is then spread back out to any Fixers who had a less productive month). If he or she declines and continues to sell Liquid Blue, an "accident" tends to occur, rendering the individual unfit for future business. Rumor has it that the 'Shroom Syndicate began in No-Ward with a Fixer by the name of Don Marone.

Living Expenses

Except for the food, very little is free in Asylum, and whatever you don't pay for immediately usually winds up costing you later (some could even say that about the food, if its cost is considered in gastronomic distress). For example, every Inmate with an Occupation provides particular services, and those services have a cost. Although the exact rate varies depending on the condition of life in the particular Ward, the mood of the Inmates involved, their relationship with their potential client, and other factors, certain rough basic rates can be listed for most items and jobs.

Almanac:

minor, immediate tip ("Don't go down that alley!")	1 dose
minor tip ("Avoid that alley for a day or two.")	2 doses
average tip ("I hear the Alchemists are causing trouble.")	3 doses
major tip ("The Alchemists are going to take the Ward.")	1 bullet
major tip, detailed ("They're going to take over the supply train on Wednesday.")	6 doses
specific tip ("The Syndicate's found out where you live.")	2 bullets
vital tip ("They're going to hit you at the train tomorrow.")	3 bullets
carrying a minor message ("Tell Harry I'll catch up with him tomorrow.")	1 dose



major message ("Tell Harry the Syndicate's on to him!")	1 bullet
urgent message ("They're going to ambush him today in the Mall!")	2 bullets

Crafter:

Fixing a clogged toilet/sink	6 doses
Fixing a broken water pipe	2 bullets
Fixing a broken door	6 doses
Fixing a broken wall	4 bullets
Building a new wall	4 bullets
Building a loft	6 bullets
Repairing a burnt-out electrical outlet	6 doses
Replacing old wiring	4 bullets/room

Fieldhand: not applicable (they are paid for their labor by getting to live in Fields and eat fresh food)

Fixer: see Pill-Popping, page **59**.

Patch:

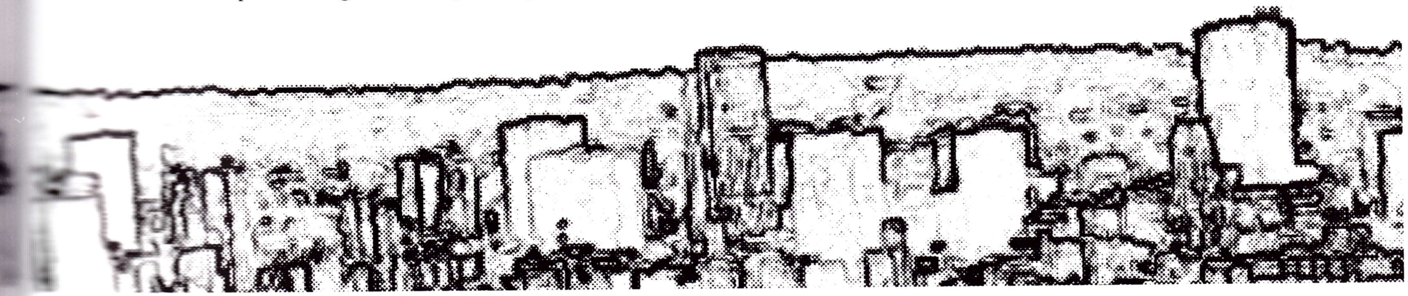
Stitching up a wound	2 doses
Clearing an infection	3 doses
Setting a bone	1 bullet
Amputating a limb	2 bullets
Major surgery	3 bullets
House calls (in addition to the actual service)	1 bullet

Round: (prices are fixed, whether the weapon was made or found)

Knife	2-3 bullets
Large antique weapon (sword, spear, mace)	4 bullets
Missile weapon (crossbow, bow)	5 bullets
Pistol	7 bullets
Rifle	15+ bullets
Submachine gun	20+ bullets

Scribe:

Telling a specific story	2 doses
Translating a sign or note	2 doses
Translating a diagram or passage	1 bullet
Translating/explaining a book	3 bullets
Explaining a simple process (gravity)	1 bullet
Explaining a complex process (electricity)	3 bullets



Sharks: not applicable (Sharks take a percentage of the house profits on any game they run)

Tinker: (prices are for building items — repairing costs one less)

Simple tool (hammer, wrench, pliers)	1 bullet
Complicated tool (socket wrench, lockpick)	2 bullets
Musical instrument (flute, drum)	3 bullets
Weapon (knife, bow, ax)	2 bullets
Complex weapon (crossbow, switchblade)	3 bullets
Pistol (from scratch)	4 bullets
Electronic device, small (pocket alarm, flashlight)	2 bullets
Electronic device, tiny (tracking device, bug)	4 bullets
Electronic device, large (electrified fence)	4 bullets

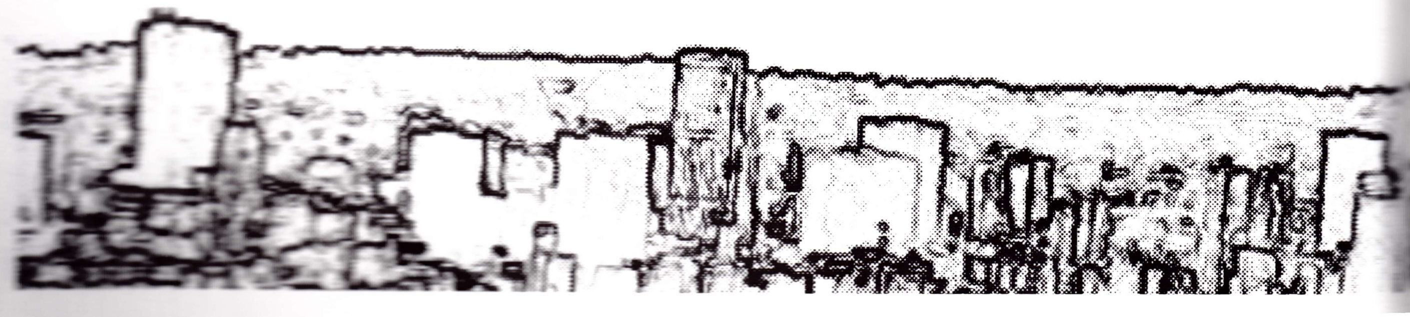
Tug: not applicable (Tugs are so rare and so eccentric that the few who do exist charge whatever they feel like at that moment)

Tune:

Customary tip for playing in general	1 dose
Playing a request	2 doses
Playing a difficult request	3 doses
Composing a song for someone	1 bullet

Weaver:

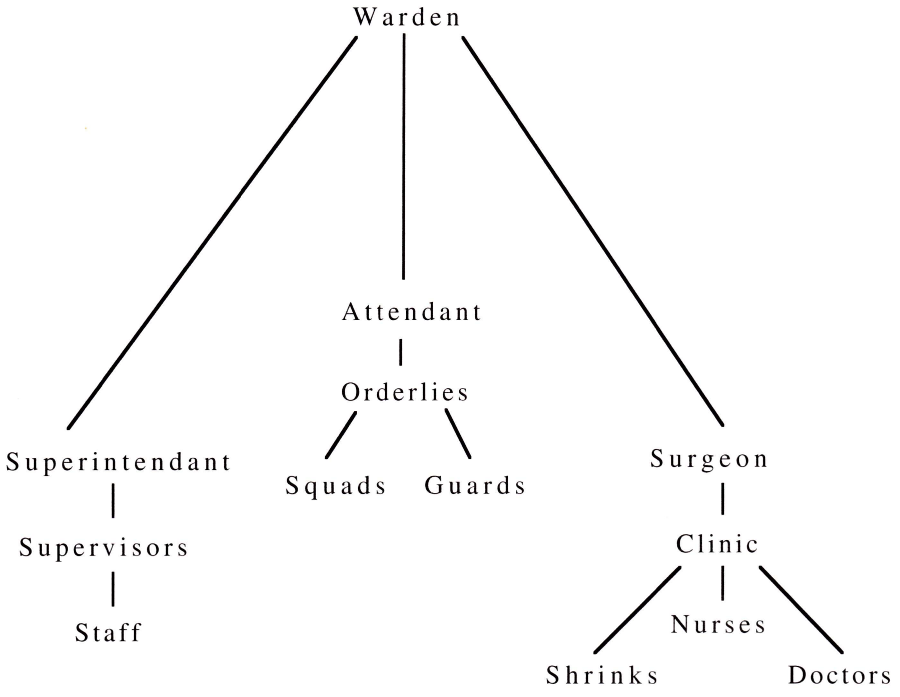
Altering pants or shirt to fit	2 doses
Altering a straitjacket to fit	3 doses
Mending a tear	2 doses
Dyeing a piece of clothing (green, yellow, black, purple)	3 doses
Dyeing a piece red	5 doses
Dyeing a piece Baby Blue (only available to members of the 'Shroom Syndicate)	5 doses
Customizing a straitjacket	3 doses
Making a small article of clothing (scarf, gloves)	1 bullet
Making large article of clothing (sweater, pants)	2 bullets
Making a full suit or a long dress	3 bullets
Making an overcoat or cloak	4 bullets

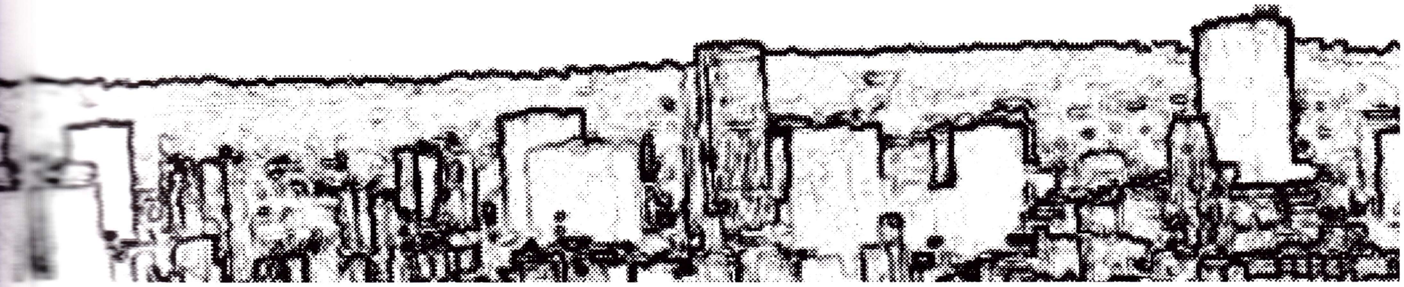


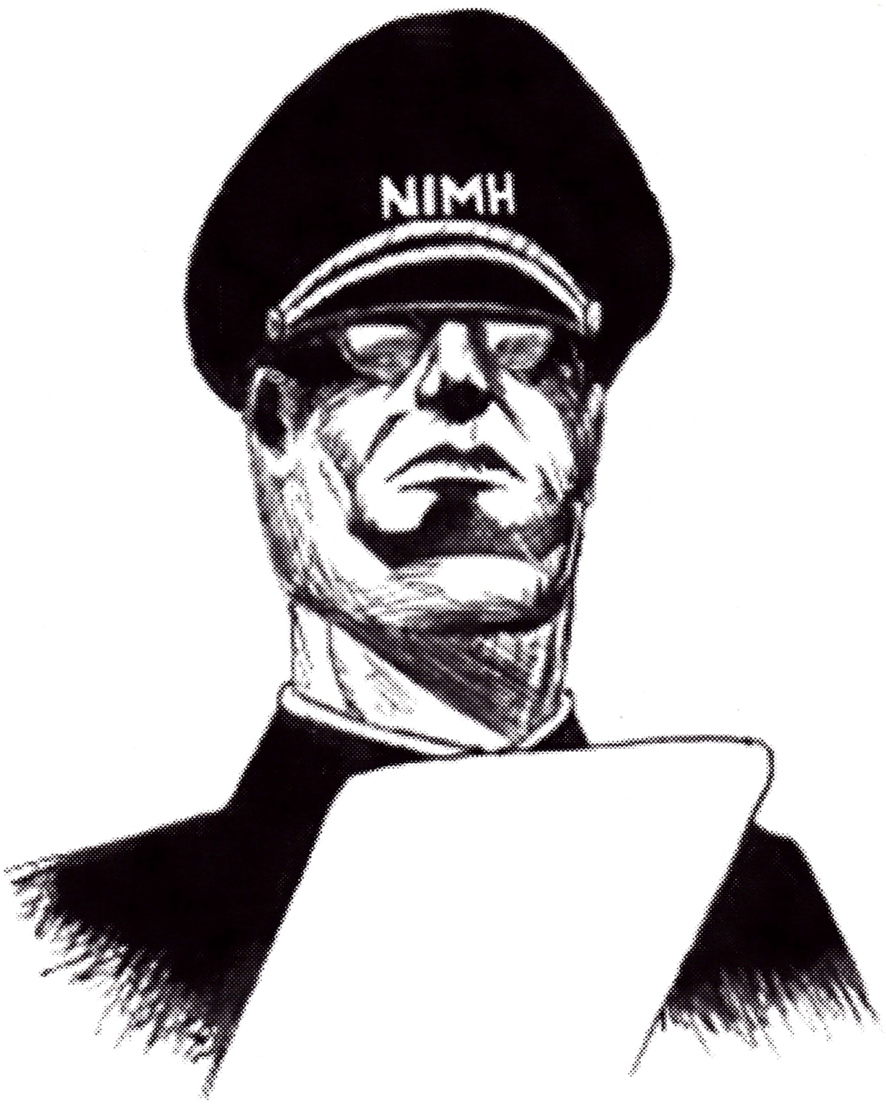
The Staff

Each Ward has a Warden in charge, and he or she sees to the distribution of goods and the general upkeep of the Ward and also controls the Staff (which can be broken down into the Orderlies, the Clinic, and the general Staff). In return for such service, the Wardens and Staff get priority on supplies, including the original non-institutional food and better clothing. They live in Offices, usually a small fortress of living quarters and workspaces. There is a Directorate that appoints the Wardens and oversees them and the general distribution, but no one else knows whether this is one person or several, or even where the Directorate resides. Communication with the Wardens is supposedly by closed-circuit television, and no one else has ever been allowed to see those instruments in operation.

Just because the Orderlies and the other Staff live a bit better and have better food and clothes doesn't mean that they are any more immune to the general atmosphere or the perennial lack of sunlight. Every Staff member has been touched by the insanity as well, but their better training and higher standard of living mutes it a bit, and of course they have the Clinic to either help them or give them a lot of drugs to counteract the worst of the symptoms.





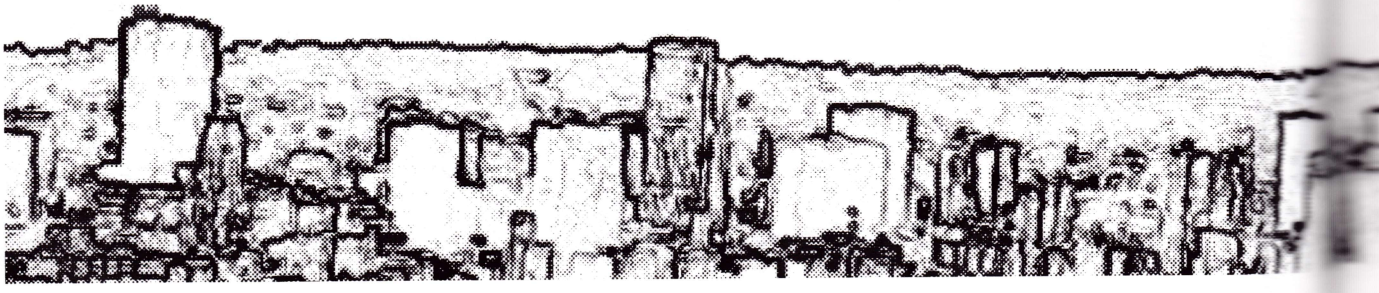


The Orderlies

In each Ward, the Orderlies are divided into Guards and Squads, with a senior member in charge of each. Both the Guard leader and the Squad leader answer to the Attendant, a former Orderly who now assigns the others to their responsibilities. The Attendant answers directly to the Warden.

In many ways the Squad is just another gang, patrolling the streets, imposing whatever they consider "order" (and the definition can change from one day to the next), lording it over everyone around them. They occasionally start fights just so they can join in, and they've also been known to simply sit and watch a fight if they feel it's amusing enough to let it run its course. The Orderlies also control The House of Solitude, a section of Offices which is devoted to the containment of those Inmates considered too dangerous to be allowed to roam the Ward freely. The Orderlies have full authority to drag anyone they consider "troublesome" to the House, and once there it is rare for an Inmate to be seen again — the rumor is that they are not only prisoners but also fodder for experiments (see The Clinic, below).

Squad members walk the streets in groups of five. They carry 9mm pistols on their right hip and tranquilizer guns on their left — consequently, the most frequent question when someone shouts



that the Orderlies are coming is "Which hand?" because which weapon they are using tells whether they intend to pacify or to eliminate. The right glove also contains a built-in tazer, activated by a thumb switch, so that rowdy Inmates can be neutralized left and right.

The Guards are in charge of maintaining the Ward's perimeters, preventing Inmates from escaping and Lunatics and others from entering. Guards have been known to accept bribes for passage in either direction, and of course not all of them care enough to be truly vigilant — others do, however, and the Warden does penalize anyone caught being negligent at their post.

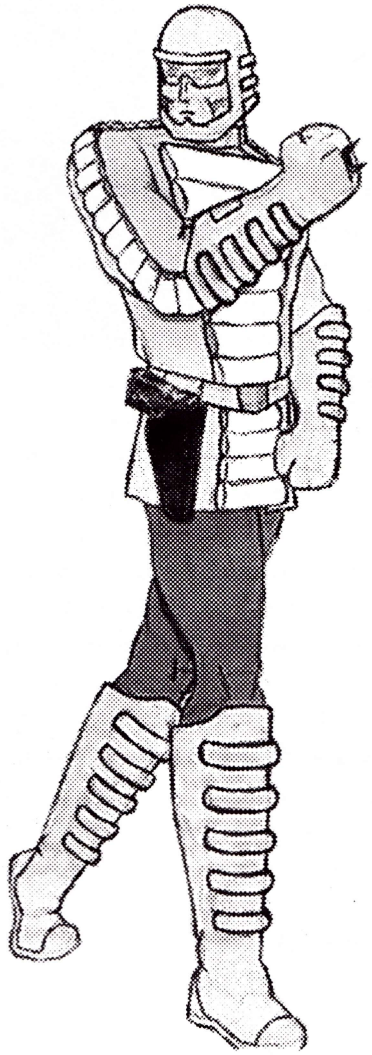
Orderlies all wear a uniform that is both functional and decorative — it is essentially a white coat with ribbing across the chest and along the outer arms, but within the ribbing is a phosphorescent algae that glows blue-white, so that a group of Orderlies walking in their usual two-one-two pattern creates a wave of glowing stripes waving back and forth. In some circles, Orderly jackets are considered a trophy of the highest order, and competitions are held to try to attain one. Few succeed.

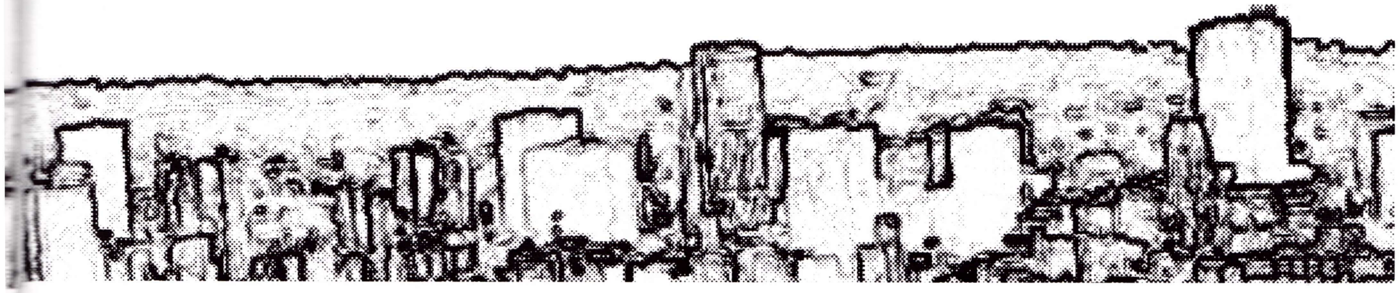
The Clinic

The Clinic is the Ward medical facility, and it has three types of Staff: Doctors, Nurses, and Shrinks. The Surgeon is in charge of the Clinic, and answers to the Warden.

The Doctors are those who see patients, perform operations, and prescribe medication or treatment as appropriate. They handle the more serious cases. Most doctors still wear the traditional white lab coat, and are quite proud of their profession — many are monomaniacs, obsessives, or anal-retentives.

Nurses are essentially medical Staff, and they handle all of the basic work: handing out prescriptions, setting breaks, cleaning wounds, prepping for surgery, etc. Nurses are not qualified to prescribe drugs or to authorize medical procedures.





Shrinks are the most frightening, and fortunately the rarest, of all Staff. They are medical personnel who have either sociopathic or homicidal Disorders, and because of this they are not allowed to see normal patients. Instead, the Warden maintains the Shrinks for the express purpose of interrogating and torturing anyone deemed an enemy and a threat.

The Clinics contain every sort of medical device still in use, but a lot of equipment was lost during the War and the succeeding riots, and other pieces eventually fell into disrepair and could not be fixed with the knowledge and tools that remained. As a result, there are still X-ray machines, mechanical pumps, various prosthetics, and all sorts of probes and scopes, but most of the gaseous anesthetics were lost and could not be replaced. Drugs are used instead, usually injected a few minutes before any major form of surgery.

Of course, many different drugs have also long since disappeared, but some of the Staff (and some of the Inmate Fixers as well) have learned how to synthesize a few of the more common types. Uppers and downers still exist, for example, as do tranquilizers (which the Nurses also fix in darts for use by the Orderlies), hallucinogens, and antibiotics. For more details on the effects of each, see the section on Pill-Popping on pp. 59. Poisons also still exist, unfortunately, but those are almost entirely in the hands of the Shrinks, so it is hard to determine what their various dosages, durations, and effects might be.

When dealing with the Clinic, remember that Doctors and Nurses may not be above bribery to provide better, more efficient care — but, on the other hand, they might also demand payment of some sort, and that could mean anything from bullets to providing a service to serving as a guinea pig for new surgical techniques. So don't go to them with a small cut or a headache — it isn't worth it!

General Staff

Staff is the catch-all title used for anyone in Offices who is not a specific member of either the Orderlies or the Clinic, although it can also be used to refer to all of them together. Staff members are assigned to specific areas or tasks, the major ones each having their own denomination:

Blenders are in charge of food

processing and preparation, turning the shipments from Fields into the drab food and drink that is served to the Inmates.

Looms spin the yarn and thread (and, when they can get it, tan the leather) and create blankets, clothing, and shoes.

Lifts deal with the trains, unloading shipments from Fields and loading and then distributing goods to the Inmates.

Beams repair buildings of any material, including the stone outer walls of the Ward itself. They are probably capable of creating new buildings, but see no reason to do so when there is an abundance of old vacant ones.

Jerry-riggers handle electrical and mechanical devices, from guns to the Orderlies' tazer-gloves to the Office lights. They do electrical work, plumbing, and gunsmithing.

There is a Supervisor who is in charge of each division. The Supervisors report to the Superintendent, who reports to the Warden.

The Beltway

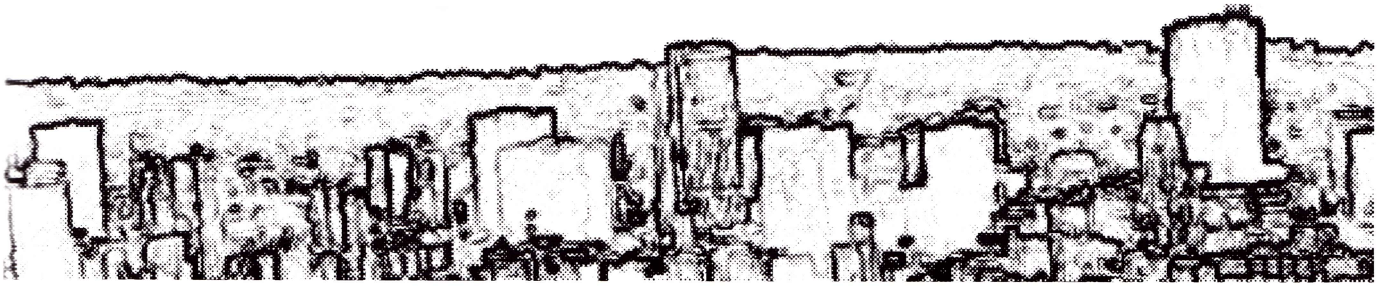
Within the Wards, most Inmates travel on foot — cars are a thing of the past, and public transportation unheard-of. Bikes still appear from time to time, and can travel at a decent speed (almost 40 mph for the low-slung aerodynamic models), but most of the streets are too strewn with rubble to be passable for any stretch. Skateboards and roller blades are fairly popular, because they are more maneuverable, but wheels can always get clogged, and are a hindrance when climbing.

There are always the trains, for those adventurous enough to try and jump onto them. The food train from Fields passes through the Ward, and as long as any hitchhikers get off before it reaches the loading bay in Offices the Guards won't bother them. The train moves at close to 200 miles per hour, however, so the risk is extreme. Internal trains are far slower, probably somewhere around 30 mph, but anyone attempting to climb onto an internal train is immediately shot by the Squad members on-board.

There are also the subway tunnels, in those Wards built above sea level (such as Ny-Ward and IllWard). Some tunnels have collapsed inward, but many are still intact and traverse the Ward, possibly even going beyond the perimeters. However, such tunnels are off-limits to Inmates, and are patrolled by whole squads of Orderlies — consequently, no one knows what lies beneath the Wards.

And then there is the Beltway.

Cutting across a block is always faster than going around, and with most buildings empty the Inmates long ago began climbing up and making their way from roof to roof. The Green Monkey, the most famous Inmate of all time, was known for this mode of travel, and at first people may have adopted it simply as a means of respect, but eventually they realized its practical advantages as well. Over time, a series of ropes, planks, simple bridges, and even walkways has grown up, and this conglomeration has been dubbed the Beltway. This is a favorite mode of transportation, because there are fewer obstructions on



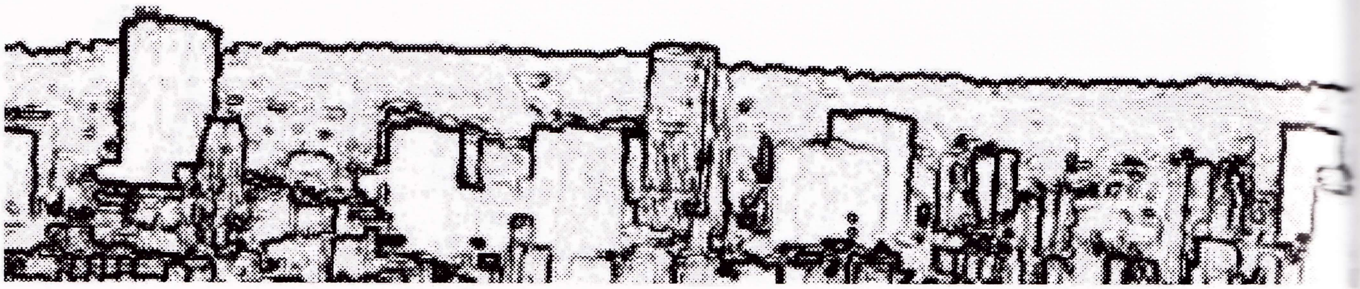
the roofs (after all, things fall down, not up) and the older and infirm cannot make their way up there and thus slow people's progress. In some Wards, The Spiritual Descendants of the Green Monkey honor his memory by walking the Beltway and making sure that it is in good repair and that no overt violence occurs in its environs. However, in many places there is only room for a single person to cross, and so a set of basic protocols has developed to aid in determining right of way. They are fairly self-explanatory:

1. Anyone who is armed gets right of way.
2. Anyone carrying rations gets right of way.
3. People moving inward, towards Offices, have right of way — except during distribution hours, when people moving outward do.
4. Orderlies always have right of way (fortunately, they rarely use the Beltway — it prevents them from walking in the tight cluster they prefer)
5. People in red have right of way (no one knows where this rule came from, although it may originally have meant people who are wounded and bleeding. Now, however, the most influential tend to wear red so that they can take advantage of this — the most influential of all dye their straitjackets solid red. Of course, anyone who can get the dye can attempt this, but unless they already have an established reputation they have to be prepared to be called on this, in which case they must fight for the right to wear the color).

In most cases, The Spiritual Descendants are also given right-of-way. However, this is not an actual rule, but simply a matter of respect and of gratitude for their Beltway-related services.

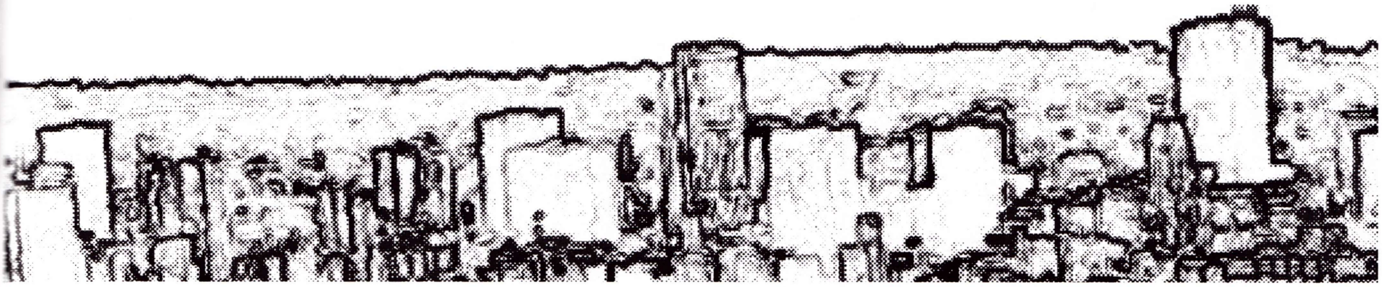
Despite these rules, disputes do occur, and sometimes fights. Most of the fights are settled Robin Hood-style — the two people involved meet in the middle of the path in question and try to knock each other off. The one who remains wins. The Spiritual Descendants remain neutral in such disputes — they themselves will never fight over such matters — and so are often asked to function as referees.

There are also some people who choose to cut through the buildings instead of utilizing the Beltway on top of them. This can be faster, and is certainly less crowded. There are, however, two problems with this method. First of all, there are not very many ropes and planks in place lower down, so unless you are strong enough to jump across or bring your own passage you may get stuck. Second, since most Inmates live in the old buildings you may wind up in the middle of someone's dwelling, and not everyone takes kindly (or nonviolently) to such an invasion of their privacy.



The Lounge

Some Inmates have Occupations to keep them busy, and others simply frequent the streets or the Beltway, singly or in groups. Still others find themselves a home and stay there, venturing out only for food, and then only when they can't find anyone else to get it for them. But for those who want a place to go for entertainment, and yet don't enjoy the constant motion of the streets, there is the Lounge. Every Ward has at least one, and the larger ones have several spaced about, but every Lounge is a large building — usually a former sports arena or auditorium — with four discreet areas: the Wall, the Arcade, the Courts,



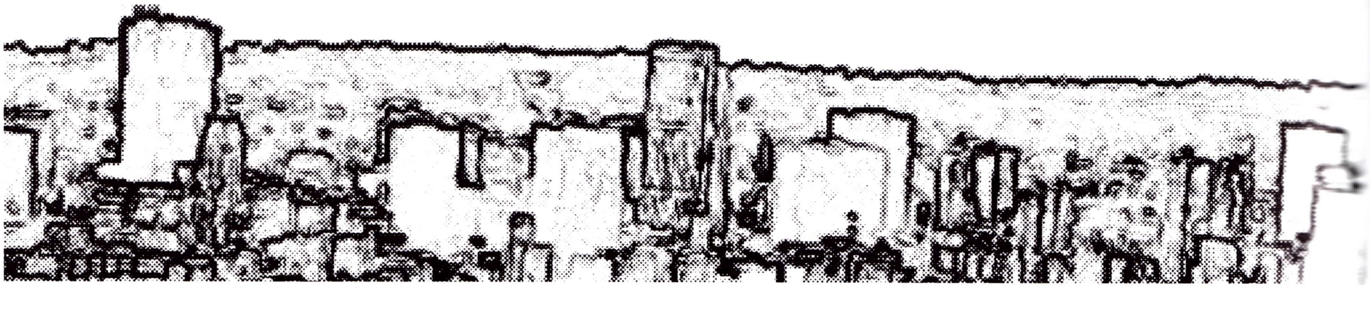
and the Sharks' Den.

The Wall is exactly that: a single side of the Lounge that is given over to a gigantic television screen. When the Wards were first established the Wall actually showed standard television shows, but then the stations all ceased to exist and Offices took over the broadcasts, showing old movies and sometimes even educational films. Now all that appears is a shifting pattern of colors, undulating in hypnotic patterns, with spacey instrumental music piped in for accompaniment. There are a number of deep couches bolted down before the screen, and every day a large number of Inmates gather there simply to stare at the screen and vegetate. The Wall plays twenty-four hours a day, without pause.

For the more mentally active, there is the Arcade. This is a long, rather eclectic room, often dimly lit. At one end are several tables with various board games, puzzles (all missing at least one piece), and chess and checkers sets, while at the other end are pool tables, dart boards, air hockey games, and even a handful of antique pinball machines. One Ward even had a bowling alley, but had to remove it after repeated injuries.

Those who are more concerned with physical than mental activity frequent the Courts — a row of basketball, handball, and tennis courts. Each court is self-contained, with one wall made of clear plastic, and they are all linked by a central hallway/seating area that has comfortable chairs arranged so that Inmates can watch the various games. Of course, most of the rules have long since been forgotten, but the courts still provide a space where Inmates can hurl, hit, or throw a ball at one another, the wall, and the basket, usually without any serious repercussions. There were once baseball batting cages as well, but Inmates kept stealing the bats for self-defense, and the cages were eventually removed.

Then there is the Sharks' Den. The human race seems to have an innate need to demonstrate superiority, whether over each other, themselves, or blind chance, and the last is the impetus behind gambling, where men and women pit their wills and their luck against each other, the flip of the card, and the roll of the die. At various points in its history the United States attempted to outlaw gambling, but the practice always continued and eventually most of the restrictions disappeared — similarly, when the first Wards were formed gambling was not permitted within them, but the Wardens came to realize that it was no more dangerous than any other pastime, and a lot safer than some, and so they allowed it to occur openly after that. Now, there are a few tables set up in the Malls sometimes, and some Inmates have informal card games and dice games with friends, but most of the gambling is run by the Sharks, and it takes place in their den. The Den is a wide, square room, usually lit only by overhead lamps, with thick carpeting from end to end and only one public entrance (the Sharks usually have a private office in back that lets out onto the Den itself). In the Den there are poker tables, blackjack tables, three-card monte stands, craps games, and even roulette wheels, and the Sharks preside over everything, making sure that no one gets (openly) cheated and



that everyone enjoys themselves. Bullets are the usual monetary unit in the Den — doses are frowned on, and hard to carry, besides — but occasionally people put up items or (more rarely) services as a stake. There are usually a few Orderlies around as well, and they are given a cut by the Sharks in return for maintaining order and for not killing anyone on the premises. Fixers often pay the Sharks a fee in order to sell their wares in the Den itself (all others are prevented from doing so by the Orderlies), and in some Wards the 'Shroom Syndicate has a standing arrangement with the Sharks and has an actual Liquid Blue bar set up in a corner. On the whole, the Sharks' Den is the most exciting part of the Lounge, and the most active, and it is a place where the more shy, reserved, or paranoid Inmates never go.

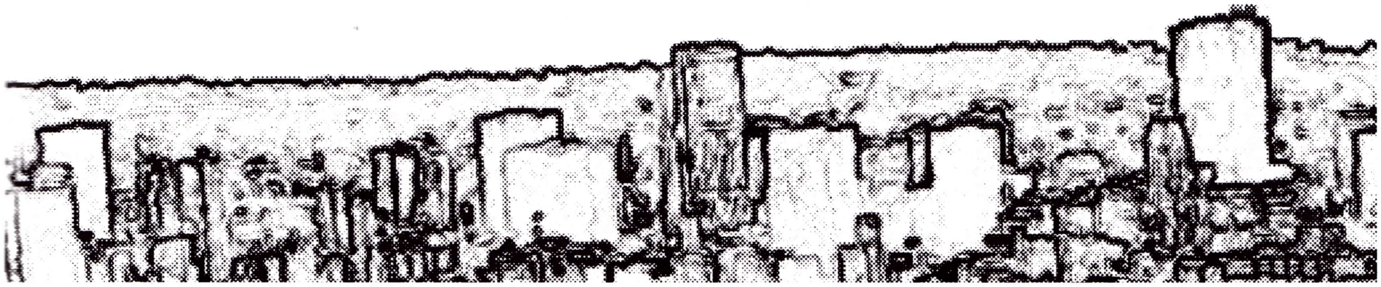
Of course, over the century and a half that Asylum has been in existence, games of chance have changed a bit, and new ones have cropped up — both the standard type that involve card or die and the more unusual sort that are particularly suited to Inmates. One of the former is called Stockpile, which is played by a number of Inmates in a circle using a single deck of cards. Everyone bets, and then the cards are dealt around the table, alternating face down and face up with each round. After everyone has at least one card, anyone may call a stop to the game at any point. Whenever a stop is called, everyone totals up their cards, and if the one who called has the highest number, they win. Regardless, the cards are returned to the pile, reshuffled, and dealt again. There are groups of Inmates who do nothing but play Stockpile all day long, and they never bet anything, but just play for the sake of having something to do.

One of the new games specifically geared towards Inmates does not involve either cards or dice — it is called Switch. An Inmate with DID (see page **66**) sits on a chair or stool in front of everyone, and others place bets as to when he or she will switch personalities, and offer suggestions as to what might trigger that change. The Inmate who guesses correctly wins. There is also a version of this game called Breakout that is played with an Autistic, where Inmates pay to try and trigger a return to "normal" activity, by word or by action. The Inmates who serve as the focal points of these games are always volunteers, and they usually receive a cut of the money in return for their services.

Shopping

The basic necessities are distributed for free every morning on the platforms, but there are numerous other items that Inmates desire. For the most part these are hand-crafted items — articles of clothing, tools, toys, and the like — but artifacts are also dredged up from old buildings and ancient stores.

Near the center of each Ward is a cleared courtyard, known as the Mall, where such goods are exchanged. Malls are usually within sight of Offices, and Orderlies often patrol them to make sure a relative peace is maintained. The Wardens approve of such commerce and



activity, and even allow Staff to produce and sell items there when they are not on duty.

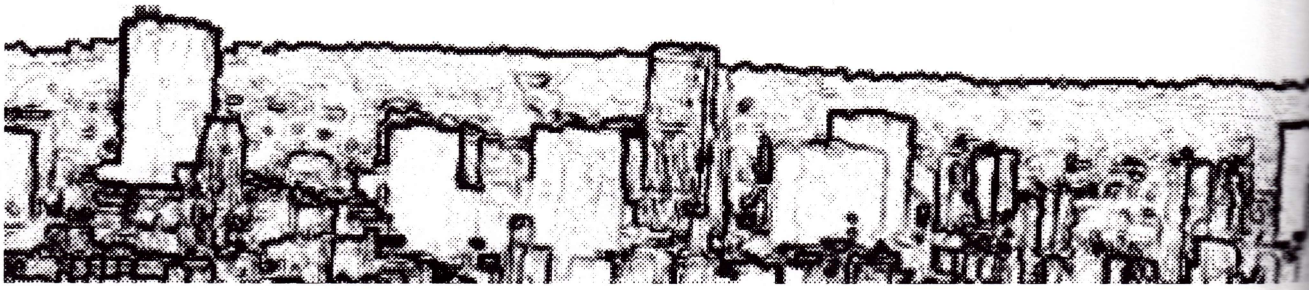
The Mall usually opens at noon, by which time the supply train has reached the first four train stops (the first platform is right outside Offices, which means it's right next to the Mall), and stays open until six, when the first tinge of red colors the Blanket Seed. Items and professional services can be bought or traded for. In some Wards there are specific areas set aside for each type of item — clothes, weapons, artwork, furniture, tools, and Antiquities — in order to make the shopping an easier process.

There are, of course, Inmates who have tried to steal from someone in the Mall, but if the injured party doesn't punish them the Orderlies will. In return for their protection, Orderlies enjoy the right to claim any one item from any of the vendors there, but most only occasionally take drugs or unusual tools — the limit to that unspoken rule is that the item cannot be too large to carry by hand and cannot be more valuable than 20 bullets.

Many of the regular vendors set up tables to display their wares, while others either grab vacant tables or simply stand around displaying whatever it is they are selling. Rounds do sell weapons there, but only standard guns and knives — anything else has to purchased privately. Fixers also sell at the Mall, but like Rounds they feel it isn't wise to keep their entire stock on hand. Sharks sometimes take up tables and run small games on them. Tunes also frequent the Mall, and usually set up a hat or bag to accept donations while they play. Those Inmates whose Occupations are more task-oriented (such as Weavers and Crafters) also hang around the Mall — even though they cannot actually work there on-site they can find new clients and make arrangements to meet later.

Here is a listing of some of the more common items found at the Mall:

item	size	price (bullets/doses)
backpack	m	4/17
belt pouch	s	2/8
hat	m	2/7
sunglasses	s	1/4
sleeping bag	l	8/34
skateboard	m	4/16
flashlight, rechargeable	m	5/21
pistol (9 mm)	m	7/30
knife (hunting)	s	3/13
knife (pocket)	s	2/8
notebook	s	1/3



chair	l	10/40
chair, folding	l	12/50
table, small	l	13/53
small painting	l	7/30
small sculpture	m	6/25
table lamp	m	8/34
floor lamp	l	12/50
pot, clay (cooking)	l	6/25
pot, metal (cooking)	l	7/30

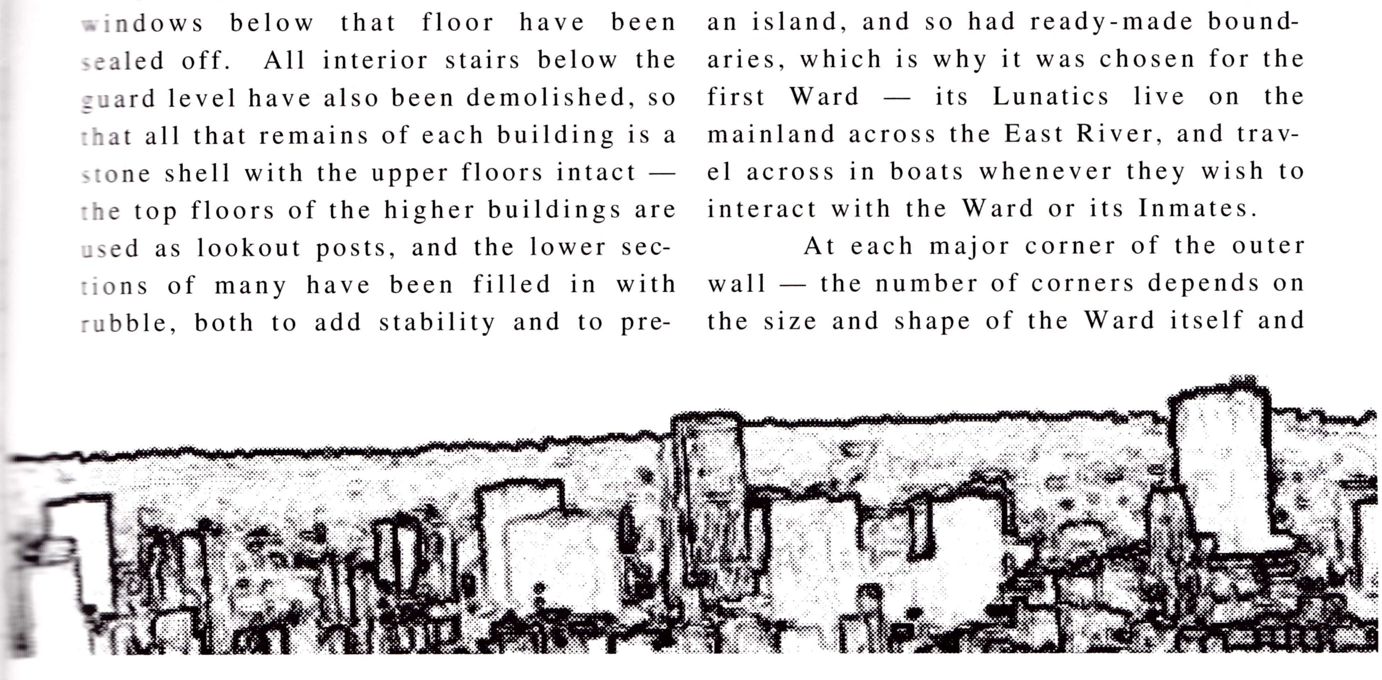
size: (s - small: can be covered by jacket/long shirt; m - medium: can be hidden by trench coat/cloak; l - large: not concealable on person)

Perimeters

Every Ward has stone walls surrounding it, although their height can range from two hundred to only thirty feet. In most places these walls are made up of former buildings that have been linked together by wall sections, all running at a single height whenever possible, although occasionally there are lower sections where a building was shorter than its surrounding neighbors. The buildings themselves have been emptied and converted for use — their interiors below the wall level have been completely demolished, and all doors and windows below that floor have been sealed off. All interior stairs below the guard level have also been demolished, so that all that remains of each building is a stone shell with the upper floors intact — the top floors of the higher buildings are used as lookout posts, and the lower sections of many have been filled in with rubble, both to add stability and to prevent any attempts to storm a building and breach the wall.

Some of the Wards — notably IllWard and La Ward — have a different configuration from the others because of the structure of their original city. Both of Chicago and Los Angeles were spread out over a wide area, with a great deal of suburban development and only a small zone of genuinely tall business buildings. Because of this, the Wards are far smaller than the original cities they sprang from — their perimeters being built along that core of tall buildings — and the vast suburban ruins that surround them are controlled by larger and more organized Lunatic Fringes (see below). Ny-ward, on the other hand, is an island, and so had ready-made boundaries, which is why it was chosen for the first Ward — its Lunatics live on the mainland across the East River, and travel across in boats whenever they wish to interact with the Ward or its Inmates.

At each major corner of the outer wall — the number of corners depends on the size and shape of the Ward itself and



the placement of the buildings that were used — is a gun emplacement, one of the only places a non-9mm weapon can be found. The guns are usually old military weapons, and they can range from 30 mm to 80 mm shells. There is at least one Guard stationed at each emplacement at all times, and others patrol sections of the wall. Most Wards also have large spotlights mounted between the gun emplacements, so that they can illuminate a target without giving away the position of the guns themselves. The weapons are rarely used anymore, but they are still maintained, just in case.

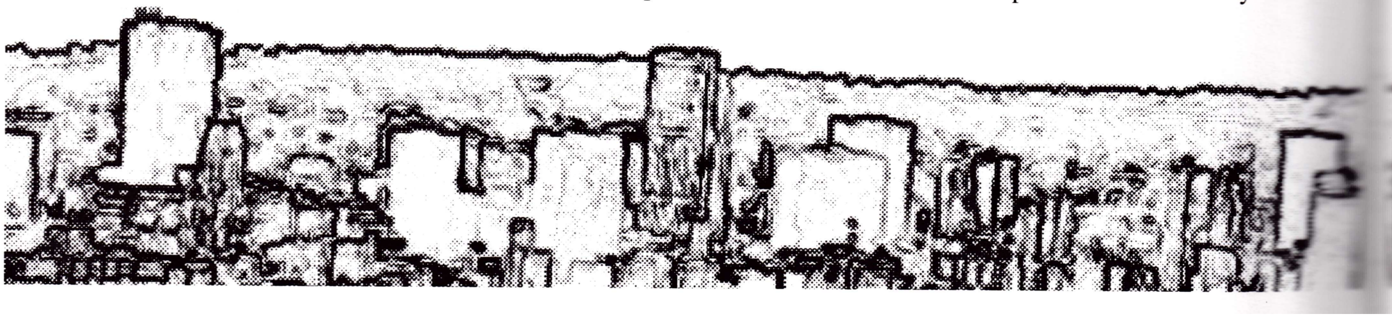
Guards also patrol the base of the wall, usually in pairs and accompanied by a Rockherder (see Zoology, above). They carry flashlights (with rechargeable batteries), and walkie-talkies so that they can call for help from either the guns above or from any Orderlies nearby.

Wards which border on water — as opposed to those which have water (usually in the form of a river) passing through them — have a slightly different set-up. There is usually a wall along the shoreline, but it is rarely as high and is often made of wood from the old dock buildings there. The Harbor Wall is linked to the general perimeter wall on each end by a tall tower that serves as a gun emplacement. The regular patrol rarely descends to the Harbor level, however, and the Harbor Wall has its own separate guard rotation. Guards also patrol the water in rowboats — two men row, one in the bow mans the spotlight, and another in the stern holds a rifle at the ready. Razor nets lie just beyond the boats' search pattern, and sunken ships often provide an underwater dam, their pipes and prows rising high enough to rip the bottom out of any boat that passes overhead.

The food trains are, of course, a constant risk both for invasion and escape, and each train is searched carefully by Guards when it enters the city. The trains are unmanned, operated by a simple Go button on a 5-minute delay and programmed to go from Fields to the Offices of the nearest Ward (usually located near the center of the Ward). Lifts remove the items earmarked for them, and then push the button, sending the train on to the next Ward in line. The cars are refrigerated to better preserve the supplies. Internal trains are used for actual distribution to Inmates — they are manned by Lifts and diligently guarded by Squads.

Dead End

Life is not very pretty in Asylum, and not always very long, which means that almost every day a few Inmates set aside their earthly shell and seek a potentially saner existence elsewhere — and, whether the trip was voluntary or



assisted, that leaves the mortal remains to be dealt with. The early Wardens knew this might be a problem — since the Ward is almost entirely concrete and rock there isn't the option of cemeteries, and without proper treatment beforehand mausoleums would quickly become charnel houses, breeding decay — so they created Dead End.

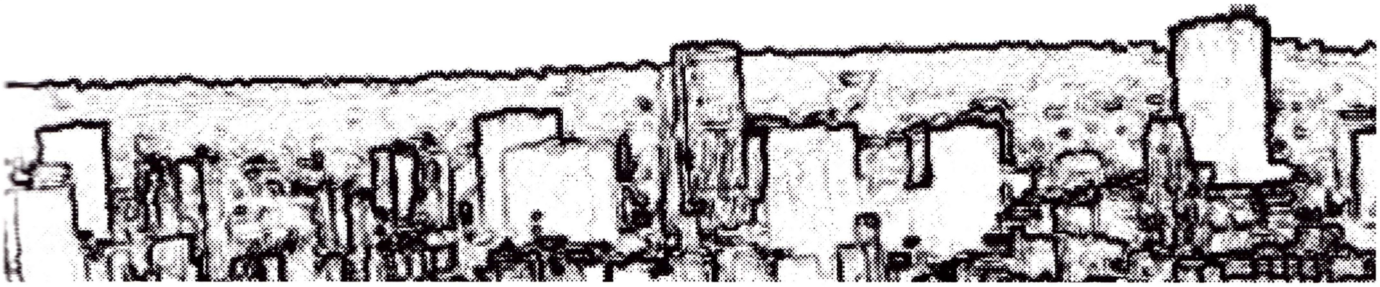
In one corner of the Ward, usually the one that is most inland and at the same time furthest from the supply train's route, there is a wide tower with no windows and only one door, and narrow pipes extruding along the upper walls. This is Dead End. Inside, there is a vast pit that takes up the entire floor, and flames dance across it. Every day Lifts trudge out to Dead End, scooping up whatever corpses they find along the way — often a dead Inmate is deposited in front of the building by friends or well-wishers (after being thoroughly stripped of valuables, of course). When they reach Dead End, the Lifts unlock the thick iron door, swing it outwards, then proceed to toss the bodies in. When they have finished, they close and lock the door and trudge on home again. The vents along the top allow the fumes to dissipate harmlessly, where the stench will not affect anyone.

Because the flames are fed daily, they almost never die out. Nonetheless, a few older Staff claim that the floor of the building is a giant grating, presumably to allow the ash and soot to fall through and thus not clog up the fire. Where the ash goes so that it does not pile up is unknown.

A few of the more sadistic gangs have tried to break into Dead End and use it to dispose of enemies, usually ones who have not yet passed on. However, the Orderlies will severely punish anyone they catch tampering with the door to the place. When a particularly well-known Inmate is entering Dead End, the Orderlies turn out for guard duty, making sure no one deters the Lifts from their grisly work — due to the morbid aura of the place, however, this is rarely a problem.

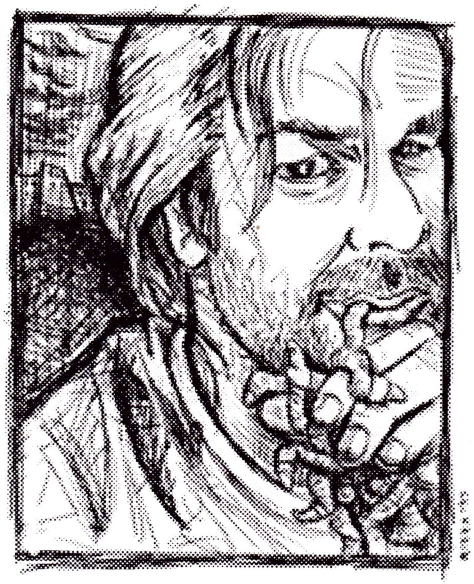
The Lunatic Fringe

Not everyone lives inside the Ward, but of those who don't very few actually rove the Wastelands. The rest huddle around the outer walls of the Ward, eking out a living there. They are known as the Lunatic Fringe, or just Lunatics. Members of the Fringe survive by harvesting what few roots and bushes still grow, eating the worms and grubs that abound in the moist, dark atmosphere, and occasionally scavenging, stealing, or trading for goods with Inmates. They trade mainly in mushrooms, which grow in great quantity in the shade of the walls themselves — many varieties are edible and the Inmates use these to supplement the usual institutional food, but some are also hallucinogenic, and Fixers pay a great deal for any of those they can find. Most Fringes also have an arrangement with the Staff of the Ward they surround, due to the Parasol trees that live on the outside of the walls — the Lunatics care for the trees, seeing that they get enough water and that they are trimmed occasionally, and the Staff throw down small packets



of food and clothing.

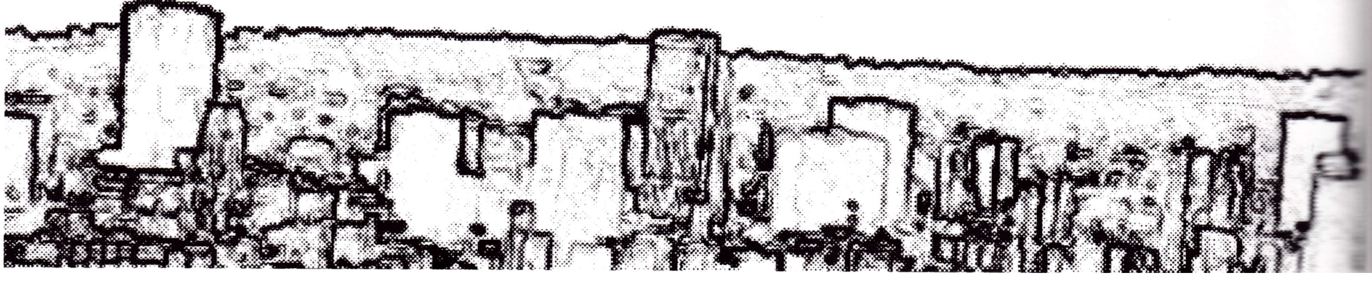
Lunatics are a dirty, scrawny lot, deprived of any sort of culture beyond the basic group structure. There is usually a leader who assigns tasks to each person, and all who do their share of the work share in the results. It is a hard life, a struggle just to eat. Average life expectancy for a Lunatic is only about thirty. Because of the harsh conditions, some of the Disorders that crop up in Inmates do not appear in Lunatics — or, if they do arise, those Lunatics do not survive for long. Autistics and Depressives, for example, die out because they do not contribute to the general cause and so do not get food; on the other hand, Manics, Paranoids, and Sociopaths tend to do quite well. They also have two Occupations that do not exist within the Wards: Forager (those who search for edible plants and grubs, and who harvest the mushroom crop) and Hunter/Gatherer (those few who, in certain areas, actually hunt the few wild animals that still exist in the Wastelands — and, occasionally, the human unfortunate enough to stray into the Lunatics' realm).



Oddly enough, most Lunatics do not seem to want to be allowed into the Wards — the food would be better in both quantity and quality, but they would lose any sense of autonomy and would be out-of-place among the ruins and the throngs of idle people. Some do try to sneak in from time to time, but even those few who have managed — usually with a little help from Guards they have been supplying — only gather up a few items and some food and escape back to the outside.

The one thing Lunatics do not have to worry about is marauders — they themselves are not considered to be any sort of threat, and because they live so close to the walls any outsiders who approach closely enough to endanger them also pose a threat to the Ward itself and are eliminated by the Guards.

In harbor Wards, the Lunatics sometimes steal, repair, or shape crude boats and venture out into the water just past the Guards' patrol area, where they fish for food — they possess the Occupation Fisherman (the aquatic version of Hunter/Gatherer) and are skilled in boating, swimming, and even diving. Of course, the fish of Asylum are a lot larger and a lot more dangerous than the ones we're most familiar with, so they're just as likely to eat the Lunatics as the other way around. In general, Lunatics near harbor Wards are fewer in number and don't tend to live as long, but the ones who survive are capable of dealing with just about anything.



Section 2

System

"Bargain Basement" -- Part Two

"Mary!"

She glanced up, her hands still closing around the food packet, and stepped back out of line as Jason hurried towards her.

"Jason? What's up?" She glanced down at his hands. "Have you eaten yet?"

"Hm?" He looked as scattered as usual — hair sticking off in all directions, jacket slightly askew, feet bare and battered — and hands empty. "No, not yet, but that's not important."

"Of course it is," Mary replied, glancing back at the platform behind her. "They're almost done here — you'd better get in line now, or you'll go hungry 'til tomorrow."

"I'm not hungry," Jason replied hastily, but Mary cut off whatever he was about to add.

"Get your food, Jason," she insisted, and her tone didn't allow for any contradiction. "We'll talk afterwards."

Grumbling but obedient, her friend stepped towards the platform along with other assorted Inmates and waited his turn to receive a packet from the Staff. He was among the last ones, and he had barely turned away when the Staff and their guards stepped back aboard the train, its doors slid shut, and the train lurched towards the next stop.

"You see?" Mary pointed out, gesturing at the departing train as Jason returned. "If you hadn't listened to me, you'd be out of food now."

"Yeah, yeah, you're right," he admitted, squatting down and pulling a small juice carton and a roll from his packet. Mary did the same, and they ate in silence for a few minutes. Then, when they had both finished, they stood again, and Jason leaned closer.

"You're always there for me, Mary," he admitted, brushing stray crumbs from his sparse beard, "and that's why I wanted to let you in on this."

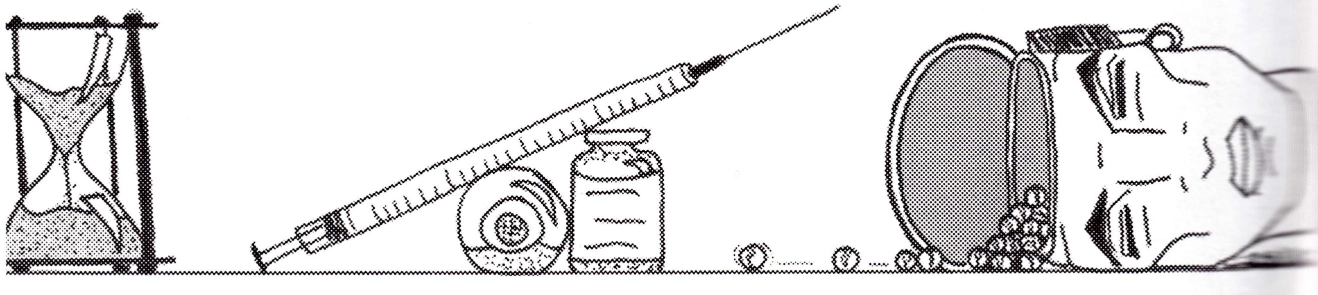
"In on what?"

He glanced about before answering, but most of those milling around had their own concerns, and no one was paying attention to them. "I think I've found an old store downtown, Mary. Untouched."

"Yeah?" Now she understood why he had been so excited — a find like that could make both of them rich for life, if it was real. "Where?"

"Over near the wall, by Dead End." That explained a lot — hardly anyone went over there voluntarily, so someplace could have been missed by the constant looting that had long since stripped the rest of the Ward of its valuables.

"Let's go, then." She would have walked off right then — she had both guns on her, and that was all she really needed — but Jason caught her shoulder.



"We can't, Mary. Not alone."

"Why not?"

"Because there are signs and things there, and they're too complex for me to read." That stopped her — Jason was smarter than she was, and if he said he couldn't make them out there was no way she could. Everyone knew that some of the old places were booby trapped, and some of those traps were still dangerous, even after all these years.

"So we need someone who can read." Mary frowned. "But it's got to be someone we can trust." She glanced around at the others walking by — some still eating, some arguing, a few openly fighting, others just talking or gesturing or gibbering. There was a Fixer selling some Blue to an older woman, and a lone Tune was entertaining a few others with a lively melody on a small flute. Her gaze swept up, over the buildings to the Beltway, but the people scampering across there were too far to make out clearly. Jason was glancing around as well, but after a minute he gave up the search, sighed a bit too loudly, and turned to regard her again.

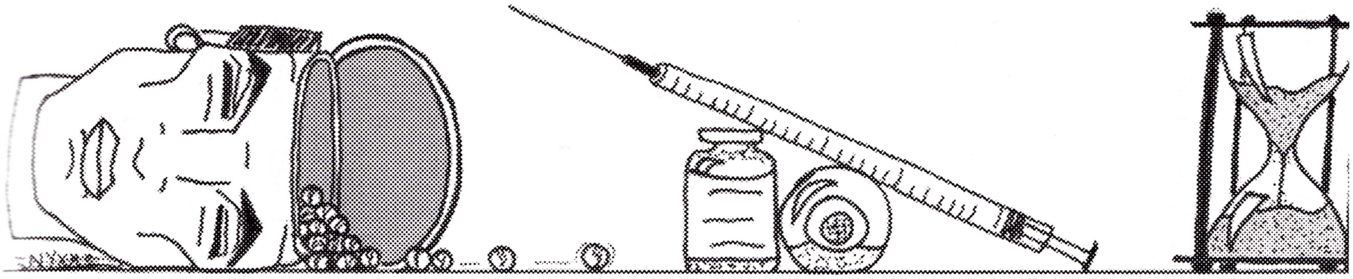
"I don't see that there's anyone else, Mary."

"There has to be someone," she insisted, still raking the area with her eyes. She saw a mugging in a narrow alleyway, but wasn't in the mood to get involved, and she snickered as two Shallow People strolled into view from the direction of the Mall, shiny fabrics clutched in their manicured hands and an argument stretching the lines of their carefully arranged faces. Nothing else offered itself, however, and finally her shoulders sank in defeat.

"All right," she agreed through gritted teeth. "Get Caustic."

"He'll be at the Mall by now," Jason decided, relief showing clearly at her lack of protest, and he headed off that way, Mary slowing her own long pace to keep alongside. "You'll see, Mary — he's really not that bad, once you get to know him. And he is good at what he does."

"Maybe," she admitted ungracefully. "Too bad what he does best is annoy the hell out of me."



Time

Despite the Blanket Seed, the sun still shows faintly in the swamp-like sky, so people can still distinguish between night and day — the swirl of algae overhead can vary from a bright haze at noon to a deep marshy blackness in the dead of night, with various discomforting hues and tints in-between. Because of this, Asylum still functions on a twenty-four-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week, twelve-months-a-year schedule — there are even watches and old clocks that still function, here and there. Sunrise and sunset are actually rather impressive, if eerie — the sun, as it passes through layers of the Blanket Seed, shines through them and creates an impression that entire levels of the sky have suddenly burst into flame, the conflagration spreading slowly across the horizon.

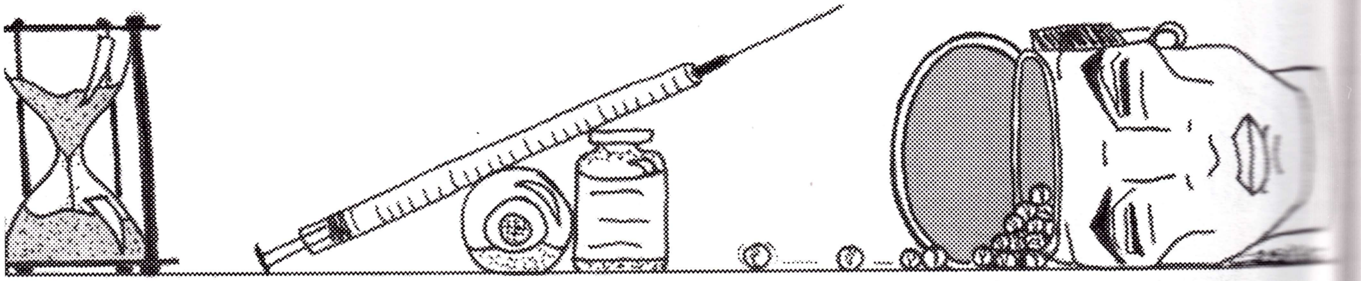
Game time is simply dealt with in normal components (days, hours, minutes, etc.), unless a combat situation occurs — this does not mean violence so much as any competition where two or more Inmates are vying to act before one another (anything from a foot race to trying to get through a door before someone else shuts it in your face). In this case, time is broken into periods — see the section on Combat (page **53**) for more detail. However, for general calculating purposes, each period can be estimated to last three seconds.

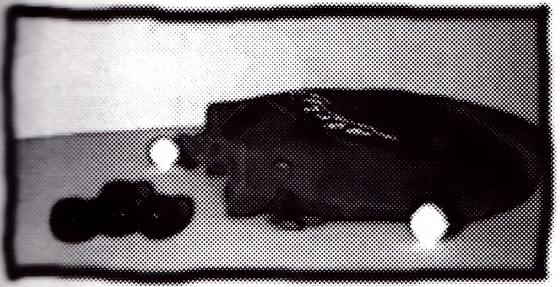
There are also scenes, which are events that take place in a single location — when the characters move to a new location, it becomes a new scene. This is used primarily for purposes of Mental Checks — see pg. **58** for more detail.

The other measurement of the passage of time — a wholly artificial one for game purposes only — is the episode. An episode is a story arc, spanning from the instant the initial action begins until the possible repercussions have been played out, or the gamemaster declares that the story has reached a conclusion. Since stories can vary greatly in length and complexity, this means that the episode can last for anywhere from a few hours (finding a lost friend) to several weeks (overthrowing Offices). This measurement is useful when determining escalation (page **107**) — it also creates a sense of separation from one plot to the next.

The Luck of the Draw

The system is based on ten colored markers of the same size, two each in five different colors: black, red, green, blue, and white. Marbles are the most appropriate choice — echoing such common phrases as "he's lost his marbles!" — but colored stones or game markers work equally well. Dice may also be used, provided they are all the same kind of die and the same general shape (it would defeat the purpose to have two sharp-cornered ten-siders, and all the rest with rounded edges). The markers are all placed together in a pouch, dice bag, or





other drawstring bag of some sort, and shaken up before each Draw. The player in question (or, if the entire group must Draw, each player in turn) reaches in and draws out one marker, then a second one, then returns them to the bag. The color pairing Drawn determines the result.

The color scheme is as follows, from highest to lowest, with each color assigned a numerical value between one and five:

white	(5)
blue	(4)
green	(3)
red	(2)
black	(1)

There are nine different levels possible, based on the sum of the two numbers — on all subsequent tables, only the first combination of each total is given. (Note, however, that on Disorder and Aberration tables in the Character Generation section combinations that have the same number value are sometimes separated, to allow for more than nine options.

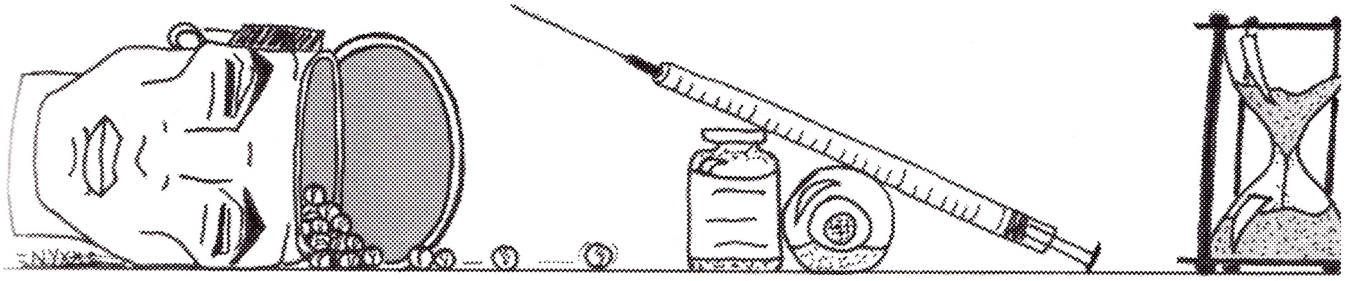
white, white	(10)
white, blue	(9)
blue, blue or white, green	(8)
blue, green or white, red	(7)
green, green or blue, red or white, black	(6)
green, red or blue, black	(5)
red, red or green, black	(4)
red, black	(3)
black, black	(2)

Difficulties

It is up to the gamemaster to determine what Difficulty a given task is: Simple, Easy, Complicated, Hard, Formidable. Each Difficulty has a numerical value, as shown on the table below.

Difficulties	
Simple	4
Easy	6
Complicated	8
Hard	10
Formidable	12

Vital Actions are those that are based solely on a character's Vitals, such as trying to lift something or determin-



ing whether a character passes out from exhaustion. Skill Checks involve a learned or practiced ability (Skills and Vitals are discussed in Section Three: Character, under those headings).

If the character's Vital or Skill is equal to or greater than the Difficulty (someone with a Zeal of 5 trying the Simple task of breaking a window, for example, or someone with an Acrobatics of 5 trying to turn a somersault), he or she accomplishes it automatically. If the Difficulty is higher, the player Draws and adds the Vital or Skill in question. If the total is equal to or higher than the number needed, the attempt is successful. Notice that it is not possible to automatically succeed at a task with a Difficulty of Complicated or higher — even a master at the Skill or someone naturally gifted in the Vital must make an effort to accomplish something that difficult. Also, a Draw of "black, black" is an automatic failure, even if the player only needed a two to succeed.

A character who completely lacks the appropriate Skill can still Draw, relying purely on luck and intuition, but only for Simple and Easy tasks — to manage a Simple task they must draw at least "green, green." For an unskilled character to manage an Easy task they must draw "white, white."

If two characters are directly competing with one another, as in an arm-wrestling match, it is an Opposed Draw — each character Draws and then adds in the appropriate Vital or Skill. The highest number possible is 15. If the characters are evenly matched in their Vitals and Skills, it is simply the higher Draw that wins. For Opposed Draws, it is imperative that the markers be returned to the bag after being Drawn, to ensure an equal opportunity. If it is a tie, Draw a second time. For Opposed Draws of a physical nature, a character can Draw only as many times as his or her Zeal, so if the tie continues the more hardy character will eventually win by default. Similarly, if there is an Opposed Draw of a mental nature, a character can only Draw as many times as his or her Lucidity.

Combat

When combat begins, time slows to a crawl, and is now measured in periods — a period is the amount of time (estimated at three seconds) it takes for everyone involved to accomplish one brief action. This process continues until people either stop confronting/competing with one another, or no one is left able to do so.

At the start of each period, everyone involved declares what they are going to do. Then everyone Draws, factors in both Fluidity bonus (see Vitals, page 76) and Weapon Speed (if they are using one), and acts in turn, from highest number on down. If you had planned on a combat response of some sort (either attacking someone or blocking an attack by someone) and that person is either unable to be attacked or unable to attack you, you may either switch targets (attacking or blocking someone else with the same weapon) or change to a non-combat response of some sort (hiding, reaching for something in your pocket, running behind someone else, etc.). You *cannot* switch one type of combat action for another (planning on shooting someone and then deciding to stab them instead). Note that drawing a gun, sword, etc. is considered a full action, unless the character has the Knack of Quick-Draw or has engineered a quick-draw system (firing through the holster, using a spring-release wrist sheath for a throwing knife, etc.).

Attacks always require a Draw, regardless of the level of your combat Skill. The colors necessary to hit are determined by the character's Skill and the difficulty involved, the same as with other Skills. If the target is attempting to dodge, you Draw to hit as normal. Then, regardless of whether you hit or not, the target makes an Opposed Draw, trying to match or better your result. If you had hit, but the target's Draw is higher, the hit becomes a miss. If you had missed to begin with, it doesn't make any difference — unless the person dodging Draws a "black, black." In that case, the miss becomes a hit, since the target has essentially thrown him- or herself into the path of the blow. In ties on Combat, the attacker always wins — it's a cruel world.

Given a cooperative target (i.e., one who does not attempt to dodge or defend) and a benign situation, the difficulty for Hand-to-Hand is always Easy. Trying to hit man-sized targets with a Melee weapon is also Easy, if they are within range and make no attempt to evade. For Firearms, the difficulty to hit Point Blank (within five feet) is Simple; Short Range (5-25 ft.) is Easy, Medium (25-75 ft.) is Complicated, Long Range (75-200 ft.) is Hard, and Extreme Range (200-300 ft.) is Formidable.

If the attack is successful, Draw for hit location on the table below. Note that the amount of health you have — in combat terms, how much damage you can take before you pass out or die — is measured in Resistance, one of the statistics that makes up a character. A point of Resistance is called a wound. For a description of how to determine your Resistance, see page 77.

Hit Location Table

Draw	Location	Damage Modifier
white, white	head shot	+2
white, blue	glancing head wound	+1
blue, blue	chest/stomach wound	+1
blue, green	shoulder wound	—
green, green	right arm	—
green, red	left arm	—
red, red	right leg	—
red, black	left leg	—
black, black	flesh wound	-1

It is possible to aim for a particular location (this is known as a Called Shot), but such an attack is one Difficulty higher. If you miss on a Called Shot, you miss entirely — it is an all-or-nothing proposition.

Weapon Table

Weapon	Damage	ROF	Range	Speed	Concealment
Guns*	8	3	100 ft	-2	J
Trank guns**	<special>	1	50 ft.	-2	J
Tazers**	<special>	1	arm span	-	-
Swords	Zeal+4	-	3 ft.	-4	C
Bows	Zeal+5	1	200 ft.	-3	-
Crossbows	8	1	100 ft.	-4	J
Knives	Zeal+2	-	1 ft.	-1	J
Staves	Zeal+4	-	6 ft.	-3	-
Clubs	Zeal+3	-	3 ft.	-3	C
Whips	Zeal+2	-	6 ft.	-2	J
Chains	Zeal+3	-	3 ft.	-4	C
punch	Zeal	-	arm span	-	-
kick	Zeal+1	-	leg span	-	-
head butt	Zeal+1	-	-	-	-

* All guns do the same damage, except for antiques, because they all use the same 9mm ammunition.

** These weapons are normally available only to Orderlies — if they can be found by Fixers, they will be priced exorbitantly.

The Weapon Speeds listed above are for actual use of the weapon — aiming and firing a pistol has an Initiative modifier of -2, while drawing the pistol in the first place is a separate action.

It is also important to remember that some characters will use makeshift weapons that do not clearly fit into one of the above categories. The gamemaster should match the proposed weapon to the closest equivalent and make modifications where necessary — for example, a small frying pan is essentially a club but can be concealed under a jacket.

Trank Guns

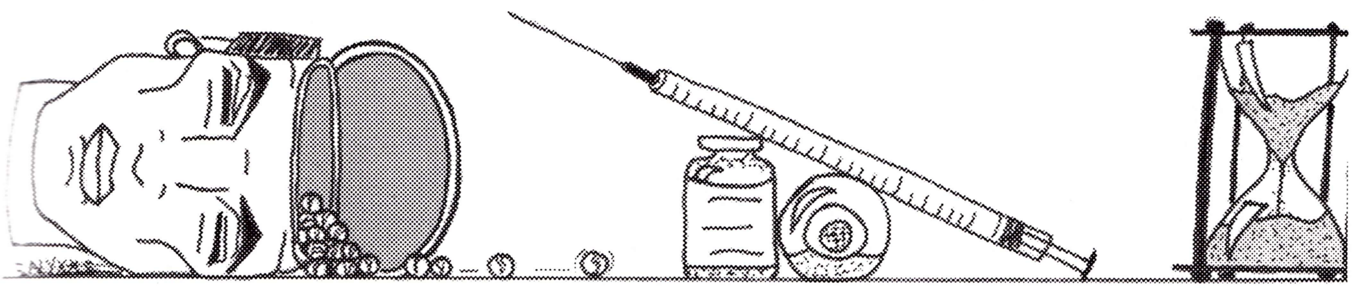
Tranquilizer darts are used by Orderlies to defuse violent situations. When a character is hit by a Trank, he or she takes no direct damage, but must Draw their Zeal at Hard or fall unconscious for (8 minus Zeal) hours. If a second Trank hits, the Difficulty is Formidable. At three Tranks, the character must Draw "white, white" to stay conscious. No one can defeat four Tranks at once. A Trank does not lose potency immediately, even if it initially has no effect — the darts are effective for three periods, after which time the drug has lost viability. So, the second period after being hit by a Trank, the character must still Draw, but this time it is only at Complicated. The third period, the Difficulty is Easy. If a character has taken more than one Trank hit, use the most recent one to determine duration and initial difficulty. A Trank gun holds a clip of ten darts.

Tazers

Tazers (which are built into the right-hand glove of each Orderly) have a similar effect to Tranks, except for two things: they actually cause damage, and their Difficulty is based on how long the character is in contact with them. If contact lasts for one period, the damage caused is 3, and the Difficulty is Hard. If the contact is held for a second period, the damage is 5 and the Difficulty becomes Formidable. No one can withstand three periods of a Tazer, and the damage inflicted is 7. Tazer damage is only temporary, however — half of the damage taken fades after (7 minus Zeal) periods, and the remaining half after (14 minus Zeal) periods. Unconsciousness caused by a Tazer is also more temporary than usual, and only lasts (45 minus Zeal) minutes. Tazers only hold a limited charge — at full power, they are capable of ten periods of use. There is a small compartment near the base of the glove which contains a flip-down electrical plug — for each period of use, the glove must be allowed to recharge for thirty minutes (assuming the outlet is working at full capacity).

Knockouts

Sometimes in combat the attacker deliberately tries for a knockout, or KO — naturally, this is only possible with Hand-to-Hand and with Melee weapons. If a KO is attempted, Draw to hit as normal, then you and your target make an Opposed Draw, your Skill versus the target's Zeal. If the target Draws less than you do, he or she passes out, and takes half the normal damage. If the attempt fails, damage is normal



— note that it is possible to knock someone out without this, if the target is wounded severely enough. It is also possible to succeed in knocking someone out and yet still kill that person, if you did so much damage that even half of it is lethal.

Off-Hand Use

Players must pick which hand their character prefers, unless they take the Detail of Ambidextrous (see page **91**). When using the off-hand (i.e., a right-handed character shooting a gun with the left hand) the Difficulty is increased by one. This applies only to combat, and to delicate operations (surgery, lock picking, fusing circuitry, etc.). In an Opposed Draw, if you are using your off hand, you reduce your Draw by 2.

Injuries

Certain wounds carry penalties to actions — in essence, for every fifth of your total Resistance, subtract 2 from any Draw (including Initiative). So if a character with a fifteen Resistance takes six wounds (2/5 total capacity), every Draw is -4, while at twelve (4/5) every Draw is -8! This also affects Movement, which is reduced in the same proportion as your Resistance, so that if you can normally run 10 mph for 20 minutes but have taken six out of fifteen on your Resistance you can now only run six (3/5 of 10) mph, and for only twelve (3/5 of 20) minutes.

Unconsciousness

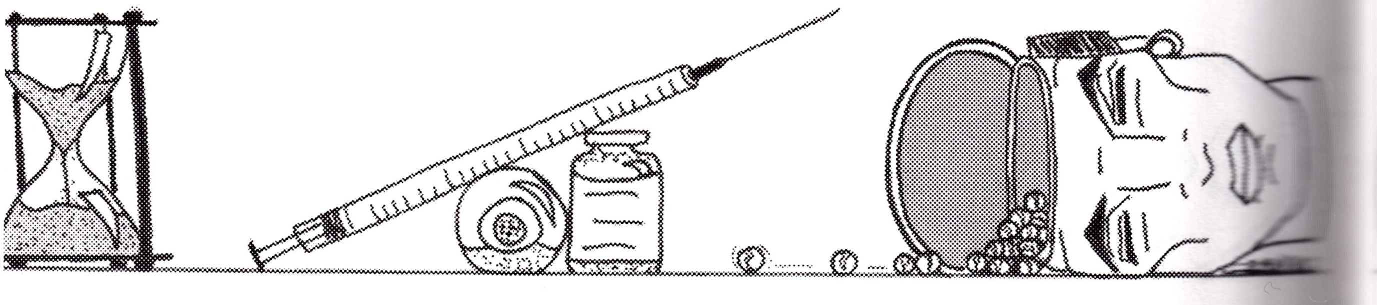
If characters takes half their total Resistance in wounds, or half the Resistance in any one area, they must Draw against their Zeal to determine if they pass out from pain. The initial difficulty is Easy, but with each new wound it increases a level, so that after a second wound the difficulty will be Complicated, and after a third it is Hard. If you fail the Draw, you pass out, and do not recover until (6 minus Zeal) hours have gone by, or you have been revived (shaken awake, splashed with water, etc.).

Blood Loss

If you take a serious wound — one that causes five or more points of damage — you will need to have that wound bandaged in order to stop the bleeding — otherwise, you will lose an additional point every turn (or, when out of combat, every five minutes). Binding a wound requires a Medicine Draw at Simple and some form of cloth or bandage.

Healing

Characters recover one wound after they have been properly treated. For minor damage this only requires that someone bind their wounds properly, but for more severe damage this can involve stitches, and gunshot wounds require



that the bullet be removed, if it still lodged in the body. After that, wounds heal at the rate of Zeal minus two per week (minimum of one) if the victim is properly cared for and allowed to recover; the time required is doubled (Zeal minus two every two weeks) if the injuries are aggravated by continual use, strenuous motion, lack of sleep, etc.

Battle Vestiges

If a character takes his or her full Resistance in an area, that area is useless. If a character takes a point or more over that number, the limb or organ is permanently useless and should probably be removed (if it wasn't removed already from the force of the blow!). Characters with one leg have their movement rate reduced by one-third, and their Fluidity may suffer (meaning that they have higher Difficulties on any action involving mobility), just as a character whose left eye is gone would be at a disadvantage for Awareness Draws and one who is missing an arm would suffer in hand-to-hand and basic grappling Draws. Such modifiers should be determined by the gamemaster on an individual basis.

Other kinds of damage:

Drowning/Asphyxiation: Take four wounds per period, and Draw Lucidity each period, at Complicated, to avoid passing out. If you pass out, you cannot reawaken unless conditions change — someone yells at you, you hit something, etc. — in which case you can Draw Lucidity again, at Hard. If you do not reawaken, you die — it's that simple.

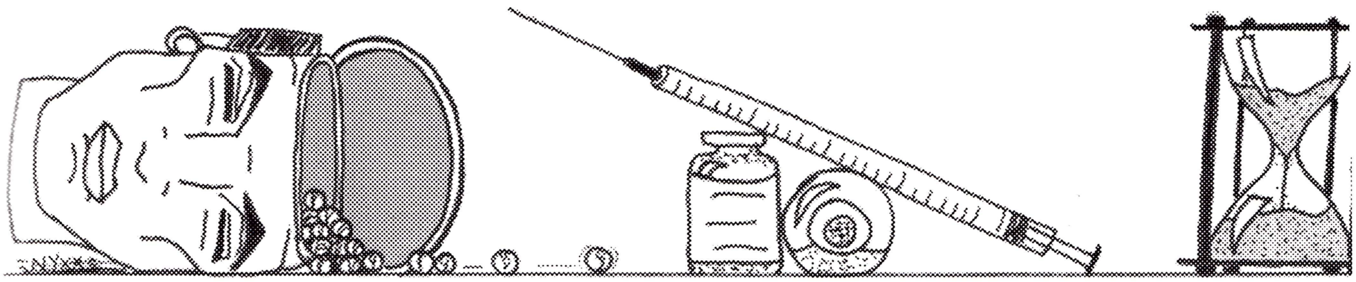
Falls: Draw Fluidity at Complicated. If successful, you manage to twist and roll as you drop, and you take 1 wound for every two feet you fall, rounding up. If unsuccessful, take 1 wound per foot and Draw versus Unconsciousness (see above). On surfaces like concrete, stone, or metal, add 2 wounds to the total damage — on softer surfaces like grass, mud, sand, etc., subtract 2.

Fire: Take 5 wounds per period if directly in contact with the flames, 2 if in the same area (from intense heat), and Draw Lucidity every other period, at Complicated, to avoid Asphyxiation.

Blood Rage

One of the most famous mental aberrations in history belonged to the nomadic Viking warriors who ruled the Scandinavian coasts several centuries ago, and was not only accepted by them but highly valued and admired. This was the ability to ignore pain — to essentially shut down the higher brain functions and transform oneself into a vicious killing machine with no thought and no weakness, fighting on until hacked to pieces or until everyone else in the vicinity was dead. It was known as the *Berserkergang*, or the Blood Rage.

Most violent Inmates are capable of attaining Blood Rage, or "going Berserk" — all that is required is that your Zeal be higher than your Lucidity. When you take damage, whether self-inflicted or otherwise, the sight and smell — and usually taste



— of the blood can send you into a complete frenzy of destruction. Subtract your Lucidity from your Zeal (leaving a number somewhere between one and four) and then Draw a single marble. If you Draw a value less than or equal to your target number, then you go Berserk. Thus, someone with a Zeal of 5 and a Lucidity of 4 needs to Draw a black, while someone with a Zeal of 5 and a Lucidity of 1 can draw anything except a white. Drawing a white means that you do not succeed in achieving Blood Rage, regardless of your Vitals.

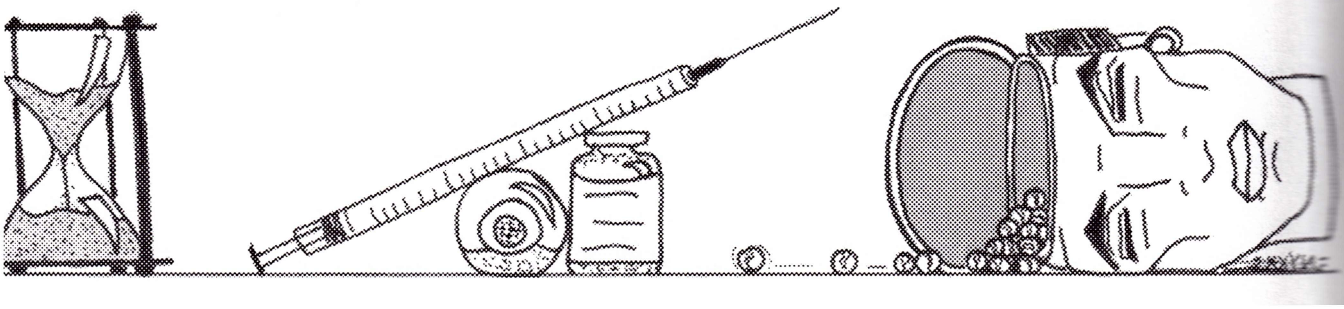
When you reach Blood Rage, your Zeal temporarily raises by two, and your Fluidity by one, but your Lucidity and Aura drop to zero because your character is now incapable of conscious thought. Keep track of the damage done to you, but do not take any penalties for it. If an area exceeds its Resistance, it becomes useless, but the damage still does not slow you down — the only things that will stop a Berserker are death, immobility (for example, losing both legs), unconsciousness, or a lack of opponents. And for Berserkers, anyone in sight that is standing is considered an opponent. Running away is impossible for a Berserker because it requires at least rudimentary thought, and Berserkers do not think. Speech is, likewise, unattainable beyond gurgles and howls.

Releasing the Blood Rage is exhausting, and after it is over the character is utterly drained — Draw Zeal at Hard to retain consciousness. Then, if the character succeeds, Draw for Unconsciousness for each major wound taken but ignored during the battle. After coming down from a Blood Rage, the character requires food and sleep before being fully recovered — it will take (10 minus Zeal) hours at least, and that is if there is no further exertion. A character who has Blood Raged is incapable of fighting in any capacity for at least (6 minus Zeal) hours. This ability is not something to be taken lightly.

Mental Checks

At the start of each new scene, the gamemaster should call for a Mental Check — this is a group Draw to determine the level of each character's Aberration for the time being. For this kind of Draw, the higher the colors the calmer the Aberration is. The table for each Aberration is given under its description in the section on Character, on page **69**. Note that, if a character has more than one Aberration, each one must be Drawn separately. Let everyone Draw once, then those with a second can Draw again, then those with a third, etc.

Although a single scene usually encompasses all of the time spent in one location, there are exceptions, and these should be considered when determining how often to demand a Mental Check. Sleep, for example, leads to a change in scene, so that even characters who have stayed in one spot for several days should Draw each morning to determine their condition. Sudden shock is also a scene change, such as when someone bursts into a room with a gun or a loud explosion occurs just outside. Taking drugs of any sort also causes a personal shift in



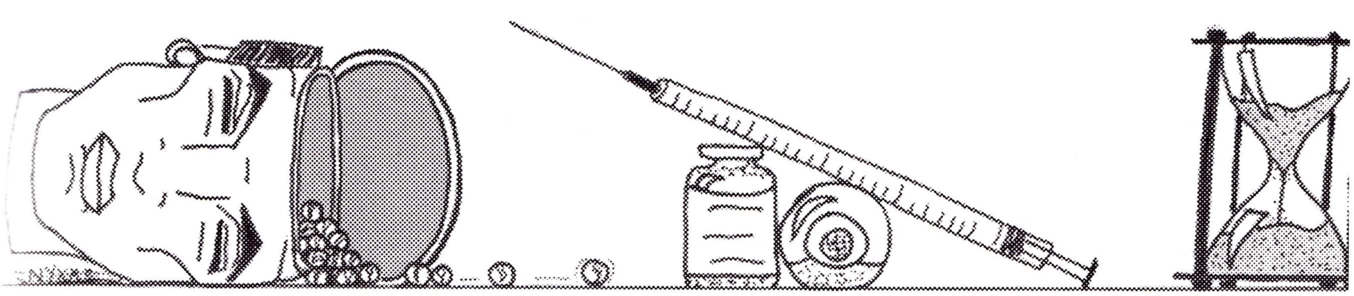
scene, so that only the Inmate who is affected needs to Draw again.

Pill-Popping

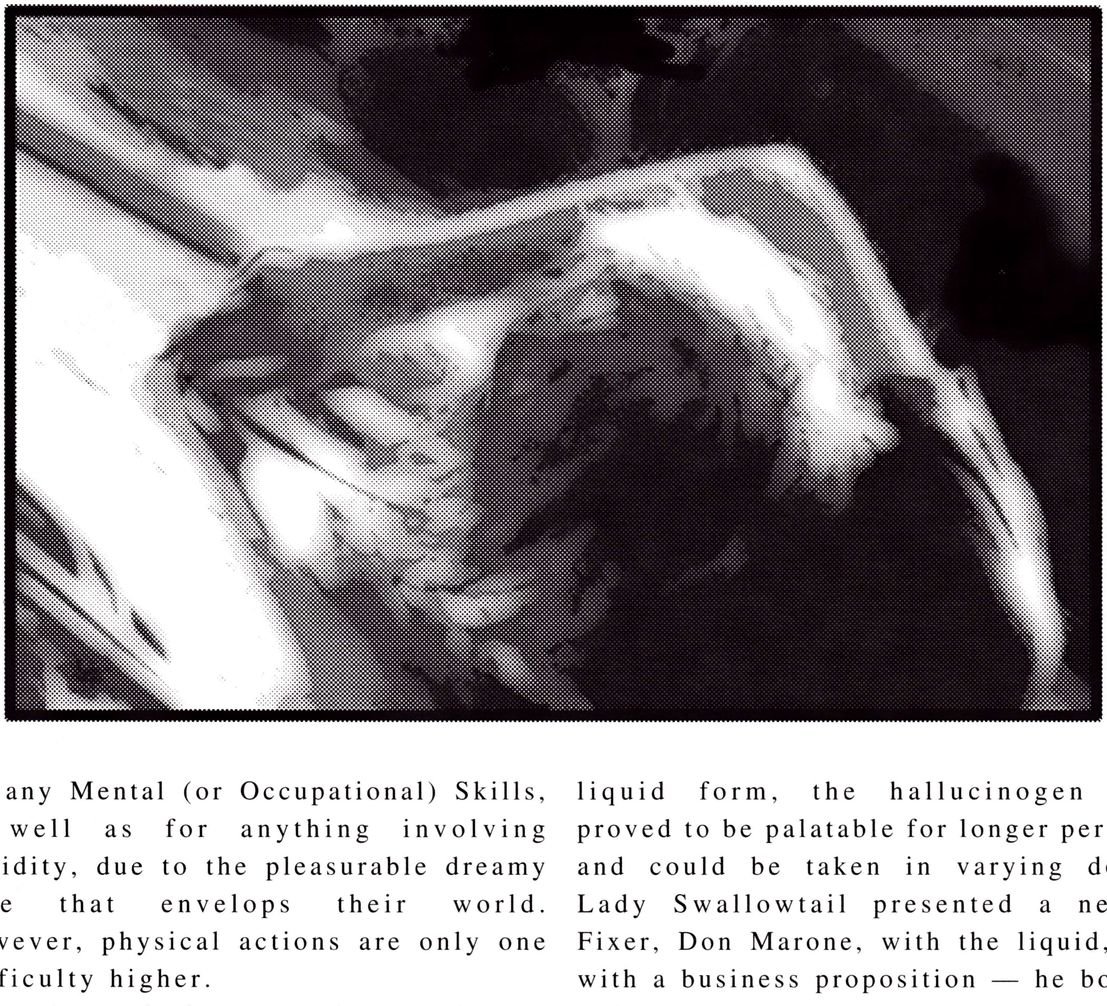
Drugs are a part of life in Asylum — after all, if you keep the Inmates drugged and docile they can't cause a problem. So a section of Fields is set aside to produce certain plants. The raw materials from these plants are sent to the Wards, where Staff process them and shape them into doses of the antistimulant known as Valium. The doses are then passed out once a week, one per Inmate (in theory). Thus, each Inmate should only have one Valium a week, keeping them docile without addicting them or impairing them.

Of course, this never works in practice. First of all, since Staff can also be not only disordered but also apathetic or incompetent, Inmates can manage to sneak, con, or steal extra doses — there are no checklists for Inmates, so the only way to prevent someone from simply stepping back in line multiple times is to recognize them and care enough to stop them. Also, Staff can be bribed with other drugs, the unofficial ones that are not processed through Offices and so are not readily available to them. And a surplus of doses is always made, because it is safer to have too many than too few — the only known Inmate riots occurred over shortages, not of food and clothing, but of doses. The result is that most Inmates can obtain enough doses to last the better part of a week, and since they are used as currency some people have a good deal more than others.

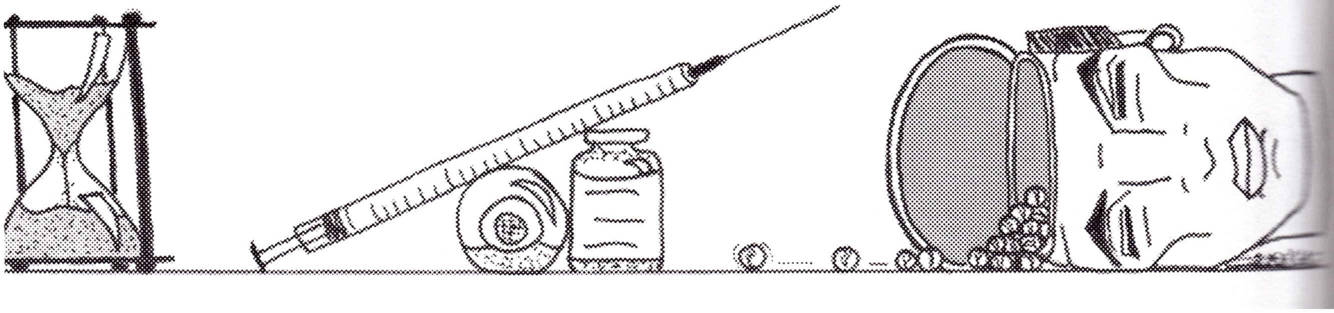
The effect of a Dose is simple — when taken, characters Draw at a difficulty of Hard, adding in any Lucidity modifier they might have (see page **76**). If they fail, they are disoriented and listless for (13 minus Zeal) hours. If they succeed, the duration is halved. While on Valium, all Draws are at one Difficulty higher, and no violent actions (i.e., combat) can be attempted. A warm pleasant numbness pervades the Inmate's senses.



There are other forms of drugs as well. The most popular are the mushrooms grown by the Lunatic Fringe and sold either directly to Inmates or to Fixers. The mushrooms are hallucinogenic, and will cause a character to become Psychotic for (10 minus Zeal) hours — again, a Lucidity Draw should be made, and if successful it will halve the duration. While under the influence, characters are at two Difficulties higher for any Mental (or Occupational) Skills, as well as for anything involving Lucidity, due to the pleasurable dreamy haze that envelops their world. However, physical actions are only one Difficulty higher.



A variation on the mushroom appeared fairly recently — around 2151 — in No-Ward. A Weaver named Lady Ellegance Swallowtail purchased several of a particular variety of mushroom — called "Baby Blues" for their brilliant, slightly iridescent blue (actually more of a cobalt blue, but the name stuck) —and proceeded to grind them into a dye. The remaining liquid retained the blue color and a faint sheen, and, as an unwitting friend of Lady Ellegance soon confirmed, most of the mushroom's hallucinogenic nature. However, because it was now in liquid form, the hallucinogen now proved to be palatable for longer periods, and could be taken in varying doses. Lady Swallowtail presented a nearby Fixer, Don Marone, with the liquid, and with a business proposition — he bought Baby Blues and gave them to her, and she provided him with the liquid, which they dubbed Liquid Blue, for a small fee (of



course, she also got to keep the dye). Liquid Blue proved to be a huge success, and the two marketed the concoction in other Wards as well — Don Marone eventually formed the 'Shroom Syndicate (see Social Life, pg. **30**) to increase visibility and distribution of the drug. For some reason, no other mushroom has been as easily translated into liquid form, and Liquid Blue has become, after Doses themselves, the most popular form of drug available. Liquid Blue has the same effect as the regular mushrooms do, but it can be taken in half doses (one difficulty higher for Mental/Lucidity/Occupational, Physical at normal, duration of [6 minus Zeal]) as well as full ones. Drinking Liquid Blue dyes the tongue a brilliant dark blue, and perpetual drinkers see the world around them in a faint shade of blue, due to the drug's alteration of the way they perceive reality.

Stimulants are rare but do exist — they can counteract Depression and sometimes even Autism, and a single dose will enable a character to go without sleep for a full day and then (Zeal times 6) more hours. After that, however, the body will be exhausted and the character will have to sleep twice as long as usual (the usual amount of sleep necessary can be determined, in hours, by [10 minus Zeal]). However, while on a stimulant people tend to be jumpy, unable to focus or to stay calm — the characters will be at -1 for all Fluidity and Aura Draws, but at +1 for Zeal.

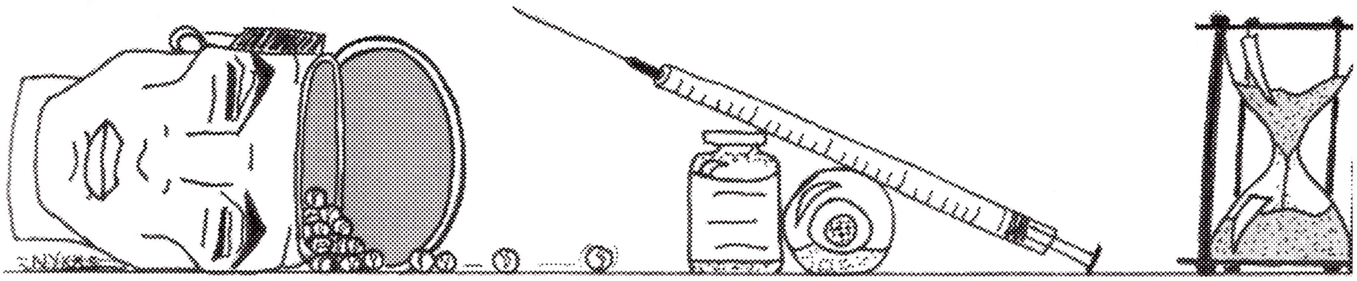
Antibiotics are actually quite common, given that most of them are developed from various molds and fungi, which thrive in the humidity. A dose of antibiotics, usually injected but occasionally ingested, will kill any infection (from an uncleaned wound, from bad food, from disease) so that the individual can begin to heal and regain strength. Until the infection is neutralized, the character cannot heal at all, and is at a -1 on both Lucidity and Zeal Draws due to weakness and fever.

Tranquilizers still exist, and have the same effect as the tranquilizer darts used by Orderlies (see the section on Trank Guns on page **55**). They are difficult to come by, because the few that escape the Clinic tend to be snatched up by Patches.

Interestingly enough, alcohol no longer exists in any quantity. This is because there are no longer enough grapes, potatoes, grains, and other foodstuffs to waste on the fermentation process. It is possible that some of the Wardens brew their own, but if they do it would only be available to themselves and their closest associates. Wine and beer that dated before the disasters would be undrinkable, having settled long since, but the hard liquors would still be palatable, and things like scotch and brandy actually improve with age. The trick with them, of course, is finding them — but there could be caches hidden away that no one has disturbed yet . . . .

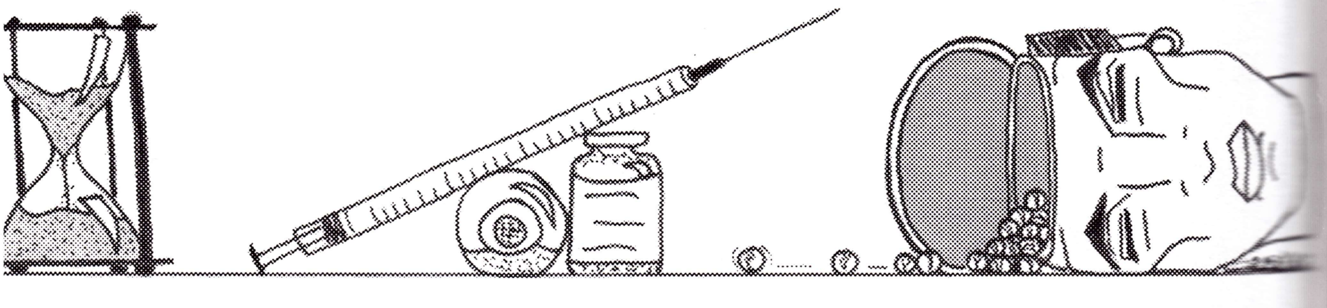
The same situation exists with tobacco, in that tobacco plants are a waste of good food production space and so are not grown at all. With tobacco, it is even more unlikely to find any viable remnants from the past, since they would have to have been preserved in airtight containers and even those might go bad after a hundred and fifty years, so Asylum is a nonsmoking country and no one alive remembers any differently.

For use with Fixers (both players



and NPCs), here is a general price list:

item	price (bullets/doses)	availability
mushrooms	4/17	uncommon
Liquid Blue (single shot)	1/4	common
Liquid Blue (bottle w/ 5 drinks)	5/20	uncommon
stimulants	8/34	rare
antibiotics	-/3	common
tranquilizers	8/34	rare
alcohol, bottle	50/250	mythical



Section 3

Character

"Bargain Basement"
-- Part Three

"So, listen, Richard, pal, you got a story for me or what?" Caustic leaned in closer, pen and pad at the ready, but the Inmate in front of him only shivered more desperately and pulled the old blanket higher over his head, eyes darting everywhere.

"I can't," he whimpered. "They'll kill me if they find out!"

"Nobody's gonna hurt you," Caustic replied, then glanced over the little man before him and snorted. "Why bother?" That didn't calm his would-be informant much, though, so he sighed and reached into his pocket. "Here, if you're so damned worried, take this." And he shoved a small metal cylinder into Richard's hands.

"What is it?" Fascinated eyes stared at the can, whose punctured top revealed a dark liquid underneath.

"It's sorta like a drug," Caustic admitted, "but sorta like a charm. If you drink enough of it, nobody'll be able to touch you, ever." At least, he added to himself, nobody except the Lifts tossing you into Dead End — he actually had no idea what the strange fluid would do, having only just found it this morning, but it was a safe bet that too much of anything that dark would eventually kill you.

Fortunately, as Caustic knew from past experience, Richard wasn't all that sharp, and he accepted the claim of the liquid's power without question or comment — the fact that it was in a metal can, a rarity in this age, helped that along. So Richard took a swig from his new treasure, making a face at the bitter viscous taste, tucked it away somewhere inside his blanket with a sigh, and then finally began to speak.

"I was near the Sharks' Den — it's almost safe, since the Orderlies there won't let anybody else hurt anyone who's inside — and I heard someone say something about . . ." he glanced around rapidly, to ensure that no one was about to descend on him, " . . . an untouched store."

"Yeah, go on." Caustic tried to hide his own excitement — the voice inside his head didn't help.

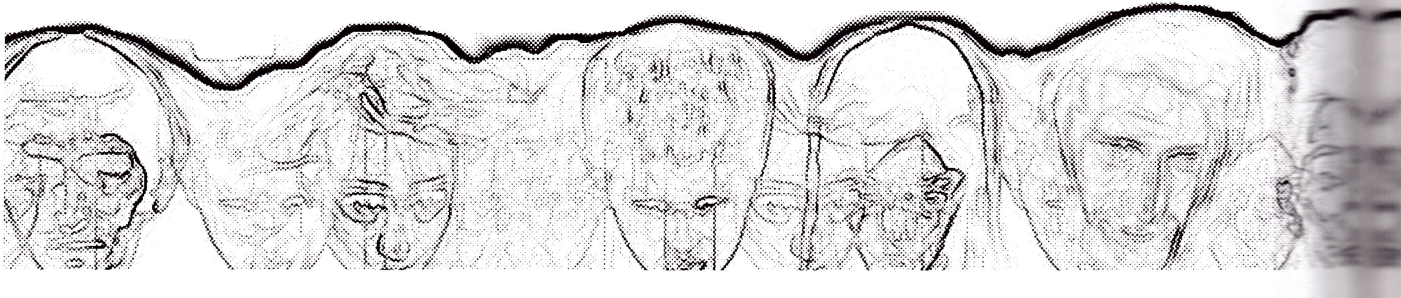
'*A store*,' it whispered to him. '*Think of it! There could be new clothes there, or perfume, or a new purse, or even a full-sized bathtub!*'

"*Shut up!*" Caustic snarled under his breath, too quietly for his jittery companion to hear. But the voice heard, or course — it always did.

'*You're so rude!*'

"*And you're an idiot!*" he replied, then returned his attention to his new informant, ignoring the rest of the voice's outraged comments.

" . . . overheard him at a train platform," Richard was saying, and Caustic cursed the voice for distracting him. "And she was telling one of her friends in the Sharks' Den, which is how I heard. I knew you'd want to know," he finished, duck-



ing back into the safety of his blanket.

"Yeah, thanks." Caustic glanced down at his pad. "Now, what did you say the guy looked like, again?"

"All I heard was that he was small, and nervous. But his companion was a large woman, tough, with two guns openly displayed." Caustic pretended to write that down, in order to hide the smile that came to his lips.

'That's Mary and Jason!' the voice announced, and, despite himself, Caustic glanced up to make sure the blanketed man hadn't heard. But of course he hadn't — nobody ever did.

"I know that! Now shut up!" He flipped his pad shut and stuffed it back into a pocket. "Well, thanks for the info, friend." His eyes flicked over to the telltale bulge where the smaller man had placed the metal can. "What say we call that liquid payment, and let it go at that?"

"O-okay. Just don't tell anybody you got the information from me."

Caustic put on his best shocked and sincere expression. "I wouldn't do that, Richard. It would destroy my reputation."

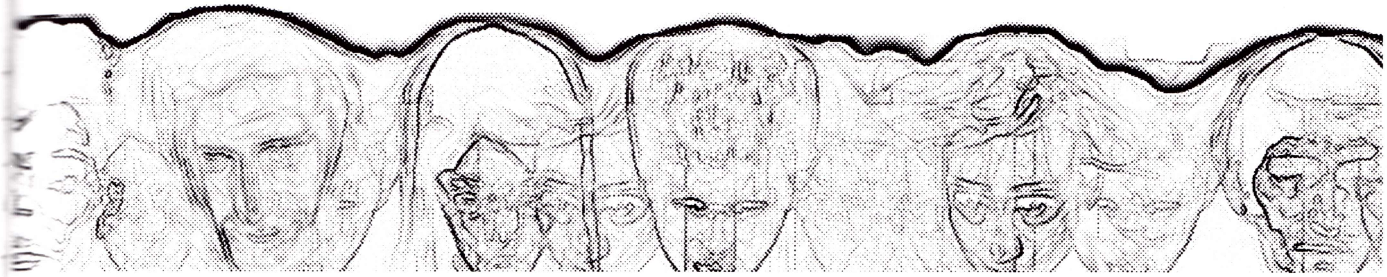
"Oh. Right." His companion nodded rapidly, then turned to shuffle off. "Thanks, Caustic."

"Sure, no problem." Caustic watched the little man slink away, then glanced around the Mall, scanning the crowd — he wasn't too surprised to see Mary's head bobbing above most of the other Inmates, or Jason's wiry frame half-hidden behind her.

"When you've got someplace old and potentially dangerous, you need a Scribe," Caustic muttered to himself as he headed into the crowd, directly towards the pair. "Someone you know, and can trust to do the job right. And, in Jason's case, that's me."

'If Mary doesn't kill you first,' the voice chuckled, and Caustic snarled.

"Well, if she does, dearie, I'll take you with me — so don't you forget it!" That shut the voice up for a moment, and Caustic took advantage of the rare silence to head rapidly towards his soon-to-be partners.



Disorders

There are, of course, a variety of different mental illnesses, differing in severity, constancy, and effect on others. These can be divided into Disorders and Aberrations. Disorders are full-fledged paradigms that are constantly in effect. Aberrations fluctuate — at their worst, Aberrations can be just as severe as Disorders, and most of them can become permanently active over time or if the Inmate is traumatized in some way.

Author's Note: There are certain mental illnesses that are deliberately not listed here because they do not lend themselves to the roleplaying experience. Suicidal tendencies, for example, are not listed, both because that is something that cannot be isolated as a single disorder (it can arise from several different sources and circumstances) and because a character cannot play someone who is suicidal in *Asylum* — a suicidal character would already have taken his or her own life, because no one would try to stop it.

DID (Disassociative Identity Disorder) Formerly known as MPD (Multiple Personality Disorder), this is simultaneously the hardest and the easiest Disorder to roleplay. The character has two or more distinct personalities, and switches back and forth between them. The reason this is easy is because each personality is handled by a different player. The reason this is hard is because each player, each personality, is constantly fighting for control of the body. At the start of each session, the personalities each Draw, and the highest Draw is currently dominant and takes possession; the others each write down a word, phrase, or action that is out of character for the dominant personality, and hand the scrap to the gamemaster. The subordinate personalities then get to sit and whisper in the dominant's ear — they cannot physically act, but they can goad him or her on. If the dominant says or does one of the key phrases or actions, the subordinate who chose that key takes possession — the others write up new keys, and harass the newly dominant personality in turn.

DIDs have a single set of Vitals, and any knowledge gained and any abstract Skills possessed can be accessed by all of the personalities equally. This means that Mental Skills are shared. Physical and Occupational Skills, however, are kept separate — in each area, divide the character's Skill points up evenly among the personalities, and let each player apply the points as desired. Each player also Draws Aberrations separately, because the personalities are distinct — personalities can even take Occupations, although there will have to be some careful negotiation among personalities, so that none of them will damage another's tools and/or merchandise.

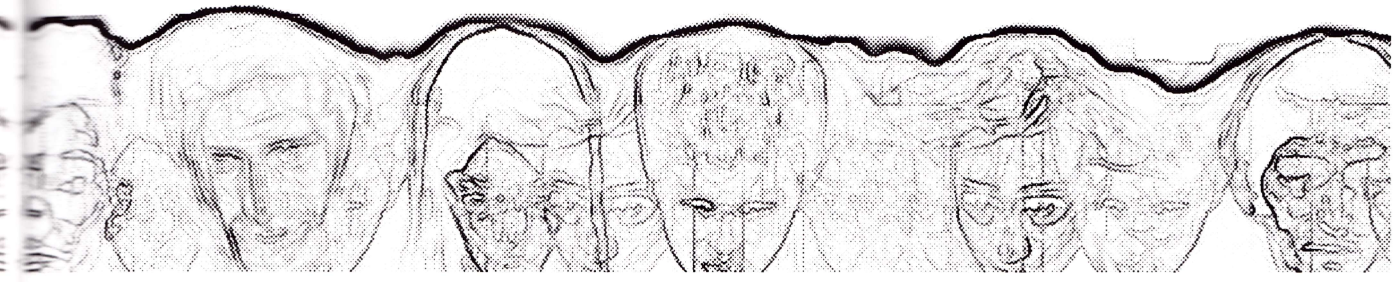
(Note that, if you choose to, it is possible to play a DID by yourself — this would simply mean that the player would create however many personalities the character has and then the storyteller would indicate whenever a different personality takes over. This is both

harder and easier than the multiple-player version; one player handles the character throughout and the switches are up to the gamemaster, but at the same time it will be intensely difficult to maintain several separate personalities for any extended period.)

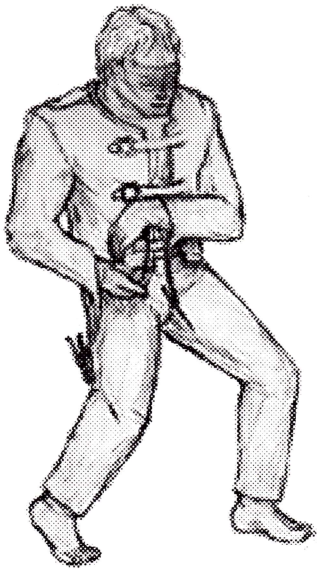
Manic: Characters who are manic are usually hyperactive, physically as well as mentally, and extremely verbal, talking almost incessantly. Manic individuals tend to be very confident, even to the point of egotism, but at the same time their thoughts are spinning so quickly that they can't concentrate for long on any one topic or its ramifications, leaving them easily distracted and not very prudent/cautious. This makes Manic characters difficult to rely upon, not because they have no desire or ability to help but because they cannot stay focused for very long.

Depressive: The opposite of Manic, Depressed characters have been wound down on the physical and emotional scale. Physical symptoms include sleep disorders (either too much sleep or too little) and general sluggishness, while on the emotional side there are frequent feelings of worthlessness and guilt, and often thoughts of suicide. Like Manic people, Depressed people cannot always be relied upon, although in their case it is less because they cannot concentrate than because they don't care to bother.

Bipolar: Formerly referred to as Manic-Depressive, characters with this Disorder are alternately hyperactive and laconic, frighteningly enthusiastic at one moment and overwhelmingly negative the next. This Disorder can also be played with two players, one taking the



Manic side and the other the Depressive side, or it can be handled by a singly individual. If performed jointly, it works in similar fashion to DID in that the subordinate player can whisper and goad, and if the dominant player is convinced to perform an action that is inappropriate for him or her (a Manic character being silent and moody, a Depressive character being energetic or enthusiastic), the players trade places. If it is performed solo, the gamemaster chooses arbitrary moments to demand a switch, and the player must change attitudes accordingly. Unlike DID, there is only one character here, so there is only one set of Skills.



Sociopath: One of the most common types of Disorder, Sociopaths are people who do not have the usual conception of right and wrong, and do not abide by standard moral codes. This leaves them with little regard for others. This does not mean that they kill or torture others out of hand, but only that killing someone does not bother them any more than swatting a fly or tearing up a piece of paper — they will do so without hesitation if it suits their purpose, be that boredom or expediency. However, they are just as likely to walk away from a chance to beat a defenseless Inmate, if they have nothing to gain from the activity.

Paranoid: A paranoid is someone who believes that others are out to get him or her, and that there is some sort of vast conspiracy of enemies lurking just around the corner. Paranoids are extremely tense individuals, seeing plots and traps everywhere, trusting no one completely.

Obsessive: These people are intensely focused on certain ideas, thoughts, images or impulses, to the point that they frequently become unable to concentrate on anything that is not in some way related to that. If the actual object, person, or situation is encountered, an Obsessed individual will attempt to stay as physically close to them/it as possible, and will disregard everything else, including food, water, and personal safety. Players choosing to have Obsessed characters should pick one thing to be obsessed about, and it should be something that is neither ever-present (like skin or air) nor forever unseen (like vampires or old-fashioned sunlight).

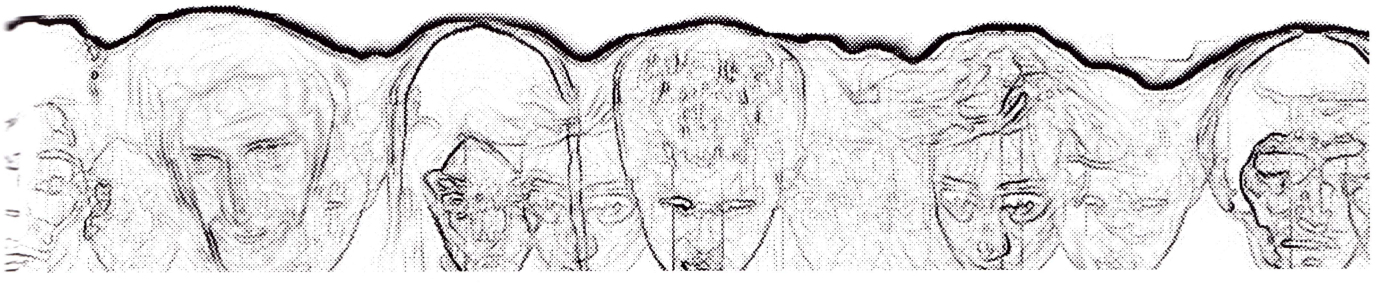
Compulsive: Characters with this Disorder have a series of often meaningless, repetitive actions that they perform regularly, and without which they cannot function clearly — performing the same actions habitually is a way of coping with anxiety. As with Obsession, the player must select the actions to be performed compulsively. Although such actions can be both unobtrusive and

occasionally useful (picking one's nails, constantly checking the ammo in a gun, etc.), they cannot be something as normally habitual as breathing or eating or getting dressed. A Compulsive character must act out his or her Compulsion at least once every few minutes (ten at most).

Psychotic: This Disorder means that the character suffers from delusions and sees the world in some other light, simply behaving in a manner appropriate for that other world. For example, someone who calls himself Sir Geoffrey and wields a spear is behaving perfectly rationally for someone who is a knight in Medieval England. Psychotic characters must inform the gamemaster what their world view is — it can be as major as believing that Asylum is really just a bad dream, or as minor as thinking that they are Jesus Christ or Elvis Presley. The truly psychotic not only think of the world differently, but they also interpret the actions of others within their own framework, so that Sir Geoffrey would see the Orderlies on the food train as a band of knights who guard the merchants who bring food to the castle.

Aberrations

Aberrations come in three different levels, which indicate the severity of the case. At every level, the player Draws during each Mental Check (see page **58**), and at the Early level of an Aberration the Draw is matched directly to the table of the appropriate Aberration. At the Advanced level, any Draw below "green, blue" must be redrawn, which means that the default behavior for characters, the lowest ebb for their brand of insanity, is moderate for most others. At the Extreme level, all Draws below "red, red" are redrawn, so that the character is constantly in a heightened state. Most characters will begin with all their Aberrations at Early. See the section on Escalation (page **107**) for more detail on when these different levels occur.



Kleptomania: The character is compelled to steal from others, usually small items that are easily pocketed. There is a particular fondness for shiny objects and anything perceived as valuable.

black, black	The character steals anything he or she can lay hands on.
black, red	The character steals rare and valuable items
red, red	The character steals rare and valuable things when there is an opening
red, green	The character steals medium items openly, more valuable ones if the opportunity is too good to pass up
green, green	The character steals medium items
green, blue	The character appropriates small items openly
blue, blue	The character steals small items when no one is watching
blue, white	The character appropriates small everyday items openly
white, white	The character picks up small everyday items when people aren't watching

Dependent: the character lacks self-confidence and needs the support of other people — at the extreme the character cannot make any real decisions on his/her own, while on the milder end he/she simply needs to have a person or persons nearby who encourage and offer moral support. Note that dependent individuals also tend to place the needs of their leader-figure above their own.

black, black	The character cannot make any decisions on his/her own.
black, red	The character can make basic decisions (eating, drinking, getting dressed) but nothing more.
red, red	The character can make simple decisions but cannot be out of physical reach of his/her leader-figure without going catatonic.
red, green	The character can make personal decisions but cannot be out of sight from leader-figure.
green, green	The character must have a trusted person in sight.
green, blue	The character must have a trusted person somewhere nearby.
blue, blue	The character must see a trusted person at least once an hour.
blue, white	The character must see a trusted person once a day.

white, white	The character simply needs someone to occasionally say he/she is doing fine, give a pat on the back, etc.

Monomania: This encompasses both egomania and megalomania. The character is convinced that the world revolves around him/her. Such characters usually demand that others acknowledge their abilities, and are often driven to achieve fame and power.

black, black	You are an infallible God.
black, red	You are a God, but You have been wrong — once.
red, red	You are far above mere mortals.
red, green	You're human — but you're the perfect human.
green, green	You're an expert on everything.
green, blue	You're an expert on anything you've ever heard of.
blue, blue	You're an expert on anything you have any skill in.
blue, white	You're an expert on anything you have high skill (3+) in.
white, white	You know a bit more than most, and should be listened to.

Compulsive: the same as the Disorder, but less stable — sometimes the character is almost completely unaffected by his/her compulsions and can actually survive without performing them, while at other times he or she must perform them almost constantly in order to avoid collapsing into panic or coma.

black, black	The character has to perform the actions constantly.
black, red	Every two minutes.
red, red	Three minutes.
red, green	Five minutes.
green, green	Ten minutes.
green, blue	Twenty minutes.
blue, blue	Thirty minutes.
blue, white	Forty minutes.
white, white	The character can actually survive up to an hour without performing the actions.

Paranoid: again, a more variable version of the Disorder.

black, black	Everyone is out to get you — even old friends are in on it.
black, red	Everyone but your oldest and most trusted friends are after you.
red, red	Anyone who isn't a friend is an enemy.
red, green	Anyone who isn't a friend is at least a spy.
green, green	Everyone you don't recognize is an assassin, gunning for

	you.
green, blue	Everyone you don't recognize is an enemy and spy.
blue, blue	Anyone you don't know is probably one of Them, and out to get you.
blue, white	Anyone you don't know would sell you out at the first chance.
white, white	There may be some people who are watching you and have plans for you.

Autistic: Autistics are terrified by the world around them, and hide away inside themselves — they rarely speak and can be led around but do not often act independently. However, sometimes a particular type of stimulus (rain, the radio, the color blue) will have an energizing effect, and each Autistic character should pick one stimulus to respond to — when encountering that stimulus, the character breaks out of his or her shell and interacts with the rest of the world, although not always in a rational fashion. Some people have been known to remain like statues except when they are confronted with a particular color or sound, and then they go berserk, often becoming violent.

black, black	Completely shut off from the outside world.
black, red	You shut out the outside at least half of each day.
red, red	You shut down from the outside world several hours a day.
red, green	You close out the world at least once a day.
green, green	When not in physical contact with anyone, you shut down.
green, blue	When not spoken to directly, you shut down.
blue, blue	You never initiate action.
blue, white	You never speak unless spoken to directly.
white, white	Certain stimulus will trigger silence.

Psychotic: a variable version of the Disorder by the same name.

black, black	The delusion is complete, and blocks out reality utterly.
black, red	Matters of real-world survival do register, although they are colored by the delusion.
red, red	Survival issues and friends both register, but they are colored by the delusion.
red, green	Survival issues and friends are seen unaltered, even through the delusion.
green, green	Occasionally reality peeps through the delusion.
green, blue	Reality and the delusion mesh together in a patchwork.
blue, blue	The delusion is overlaid on reality and overshadows it.
blue, white	The delusion is overlaid on reality, but does not conquer it.

white, white	The character is aware of their delusion, as if it were only a joke or a daydream — they can see reality through it.

Pyromania: A passion for fires, and a fascination with them, to the extent that the character enjoys setting fires just to be able to watch them consume things.

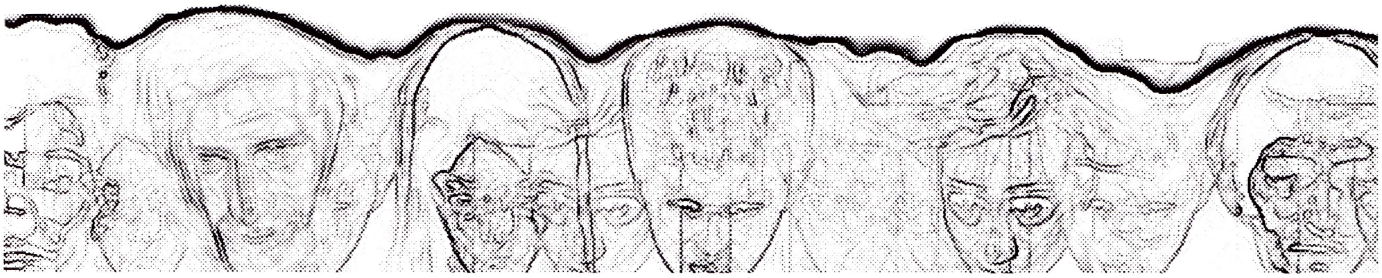
black, black	The character lights every flammable object in sight, including people.
black, red	The character lights large fires when no one is watching.
red, red	The character frequently starts medium fires.
red, green	The character lights medium fires when no one is watching.
green, green	The character frequently starts small fires.
green, blue	The character lights small fires when no one is watching.
blue, blue	The character offers to light flames constantly.
blue, white	The character offers to light flames often.
white, white	The character likes to watch the flames.

Exhibitionist: The character loves attention and will do almost anything to get it, from raising his or her voice to stripping or even deliberately wounding him/herself in front of others.

black, black	Is willing to affect personal safety/health for attention.
black, red	Is willing to endanger others for attention.
red, red	Is willing to endure pain to gain attention.
red, green	Will sacrifice personal dignity to gain attention.
green, green	Will humiliate others to gain attention.
green, blue	Will divulge secrets to attract attention.
blue, blue	Pushes people away to take center stage.
blue, white	Physically upstages others.
white, white	Talks over other people.

Pathological Liar: The exact opposite of "Honest" (see below), this aberration causes one to constantly invent stories, often without any concern for the truth. Pathological liars do not usually believe their own stories (unless they're also Psychotic . . .).

black, black	You have to invent grandiose stories and tales around everything, and you cannot give a straight answer.
black, red	There may be a hint of truth in your statement, but only a hint.
red, red	The core of the statement is true ("yes," for example), but not the body of it.



red, green	Roughly half of each statement is true.
green, green	The basic statement is true, but vastly exaggerated.
green, blue	At least one thing you say every minute is a falsehood.
blue, blue	You do not lie about major issues.
blue, white	You do not lie so much as stretch the truth to make it more interesting.
white, white	Everything you say must have at least some falsity.

Homicidal: A genuine enjoyment of killing others. Note that this is not the same thing as being a Sociopath. Sociopaths only kill when it benefits them in some way — homicidal maniacs go out of their way to kill for the sake of the kill itself, reveling in the sense of control that brings.

black, black	Will try to kill everyone
black, red	Will try to kill anyone in sight, in personal space, etc.
red, red	Will try to kill the first person they see, immediately
red, green	Will try to kill anyone near them for even the slightest reason
green, green	Will pick the first person they see and kill them, given proper opportunity.
green, blue	Will target whoever pisses them off, disagrees, etc.
blue, blue	Will target everyone with conflicting interests/opinions
blue, white	Will try to goad the first person they see into attacking, as an excuse to kill them
white, white	Must attempt to kill at least one person during the scene.

Honest: While most people feel that honesty is a good thing, characters with this aberration believe that it is a necessary thing, and that lying is an unforgivable sin.

black, black	the truth must be told, with no deviation by anyone and nothing omitted
black, red	the truth must be told by everyone, with no deviation (minor details can be omitted by others)
red, red	you must tell the truth without deviation; everyone must tell at least the basic truth
red, green	you must tell the basic truth, but you can manage to not mention some details
green, green	you must tell the basic truth, and everyone must at least part of the truth
green, blue	no one can tell any outright lies
blue, blue	no one can tell any outright lies that are harmful

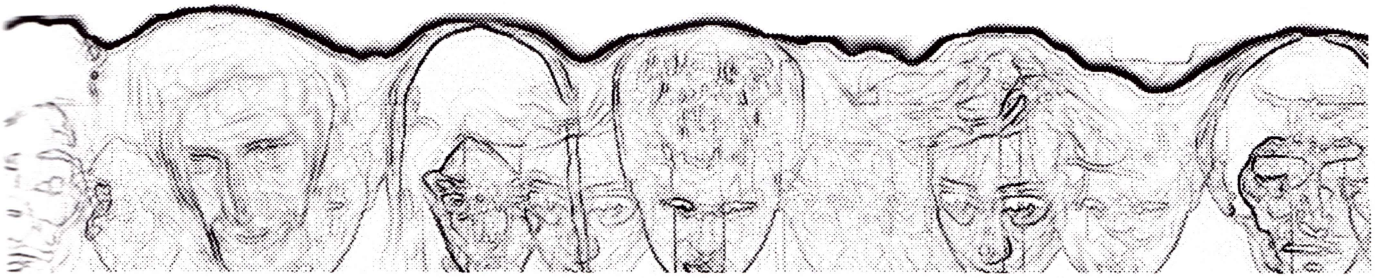
blue, white	you cannot lie, but you can let those around you do so
white, white	you cannot lie, but you can choose what to say and what to hide

Narcolepsy: The character has difficulty staying awake and energetic. This is often more of a chemical imbalance than a psychological disorder, although it could be mild form of depression or passive-aggression.

black, black	the character has to be vigorously shaken to stay awake
black, red	the character has to be vigorously shaken or yelled at to stay awake
red, red	vigorous shaking or yelling is required every few minutes
red, green	the character passes out if not moving vigorously
green, green	the character falls asleep whenever not moving
green, blue	the character falls asleep whenever it is quiet
blue, blue	the character dozes off if left alone for ten minutes
blue, white	the character dozes off if left alone for more than twenty minutes
white, white	the character is lethargic and takes every opportunity to sleep

Anal-Retentive: The character is a perfectionist and must have everything in its place, perfectly neat and perfectly arranged. Any sort of disorder or mess makes Anal-Retentives extremely agitated, and they will clean compulsively.

black, black	everything in sight must be perfectly dust-free and precisely arranged
black, red	everything nearby must be dust-free and precisely arranged
red, red	everything within arm’s reach “ “
red, green	everything on your own person “ “
green, green	everything must be dust-free and neatly stacked
green, blue	everything must be dust-free



blue, blue	nearby items must be extremely clean
blue, white	items nearby must be very clean
white, white	items nearby must be clean

Vitals

Every personality can be broken down into several categories or levels, and the more complex and multi-faceted you are, the more levels you have to your character. At the core, however, there are certain measures that can be used to describe primal features, and these are the Vitals — they are not very useful in forming a mental picture of people, or even getting a sense for what sort of attitudes and habits they have, but in terms of basic physical, mental, and social adaptability, Vitals do give the sense of what someone is really capable of. Vitals range from 1-5, and they affect many other aspects of the character, at least in passing.

Lucidity: How clearly you see reality, both major aspects and details, and how well you remember details and stay on task. People with low Lucidity are cloudy and can only make out vague impressions of the world and the people around them, not noticing finer points, and they are also absentminded and easily distracted. This also is a measure of how strongly drugs affect you — those with a low Lucidity are easily swayed and have a low tolerance, while higher Lucidity allows you to retain more self-awareness and self-control.

Lucidity	Description	Drugs Modifier
1	You're not sure what country you're in.	-2
2	You're not sure what week it is.	-1
3	You're pretty sure today is Wednesday.	0
4	It's the 23rd of August, and it's 3 pm.	+1
5	It's colder than it was this time yesterday.	+2

Fluidity: How quickly you can convert thought to action, and respond to situations. People with low Fluidity are slow and sluggish, while those with higher Fluidity are quick, graceful, and spontaneous. Characters with high or low Fluidity get a modifier for purposes of Initiative, because it affects how quickly they can adapt to the action at hand.

Fluidity	Description	Modifier
1	Oh, wait, that brick hit me.	-2

2	Catch that falling bottle! . . . too late.	-1
3	You can handle snappy comebacks.	0
4	You finish other people's sentences.	+1
5	You act even as you think about it.	+2

Aura: Your charisma, how attracted to you people are — this is not necessarily sexual but just whether people find you likable. Note that this is not always a function of physical attractiveness, just as Zeal is not the same as muscle tone — sometimes very ugly people can be very compelling. Aura modifies any Draws involving NPC (non-player character) interaction — dealing with other characters is simply roleplayed.

Aura	Description	Modifier
1	You can't even buy friends.	-2
2	You can buy friends.	-1
3	You have some friends.	0
4	You have a lot of friends, and few enemies.	+1
5	Everybody wants to be your friend.	+2

Zeal: How much physical energy you have, in terms of strength and physical prowess. Note that this is tied to, but not always parallel to, physical size and build — the insane are known for their great strength, and a wiry little man can prove more powerful than a hulking brute if he is driven enough. Because it is energy and not just muscle, this Vital also determines how much staying power you have when it comes to physical exertion. Zeal also affects your Resistance to damage.

Zeal	Description
1	You can carry your jacket a block — barely.
2	Walking to the train and back wears you out.
3	You can carry a pack for an hour or two.
4	You jog for several hours for fun.
5	You can tear a door from its hinges.

Resistance: This determines how many wounds you can take, and is based upon your Zeal. Use the formula below to determine your overall Resistance, and your Resistance in each area of the body.

General Resistance: Zeal x 20
Head: Zeal x 3
Torso: Zeal x 5
Arms: Zeal x 2 each

Legs: Zeal x 4 each

When an area takes its full Resistance in damage, it becomes useless. If the head takes more than its Resistance, the person is dead. If the character takes a number of wounds equal to total Resistance, he or she is dead.

Movement: Your rate of movement is determined by your Zeal, as is how long you can maintain your top pace. Movement is in miles per hour, simply because it is a familiar measurement. A character can run Zeal **x**2, walk at half that, and swim **x**2 (if they know how to swim). Characters can sprint at twice their normal running speed, but only for one-tenth your normal endurance, so someone with a 5 Zeal could normally run 10 mph for 20 minutes, but they could sprint at speeds of 20 mph for about 2 minutes. A character's movement rates can also be temporarily lowered by wounds (see page **56**).

Author's Note: You will have realized, in going over the Vitals, that not all areas of human ability are represented. This is not surprising, of course, given how versatile humans are — however, certain fields that are normally mentioned have been deliberately left out in this game. For example, there is no statistic for a character's intelligence — Lucidity is only how alert and connected to reality one is. This is because I feel that intelligence should be determined through roleplaying, not through some static number. If you wish to say that your character is a genius, that is up to you, but you need to demonstrate that through how you handle situations, not by waving a number around. This is especially true in Asylum, where things are not always as they seem — of course, a character could think that he's a large fish, in which case no one sees his intelligence much (unless he can speak underwater), while someone else may have a character who isn't terribly bright but who believes she is Albert Einstein and pulls it off convincingly.

The other areas that are not mentioned are comeliness (Aura is how likable you are, how strong your personal appeal is, not how physically attractive) and manual dexterity (Fluidity is response time and speed more than agility), for similar reasons. If you wish to play a character who is gorgeous and deft, do so — likewise with someone who is homely and clumsy. But it is up to the player to act these things out.

The only reason that the Vitals are included here at all is because they are necessary for game mechanics — other

Draws and attributes are determined from them. If at some point, after you are familiar with the game, you choose to do away with the Vitals altogether and simply roleplay all character attributes, that's great. In the beginning, however, I feel that the four Vitals listed are important to actually have written down — but, as with everything else, the important thing is to play them out, not to simply assume them as given.

Skills

Skills also range from 1-5 — the levels are Novice, Apprentice, Journeyman, Professional, Expert. For each Skill, you can automatically accomplish anything that someone at your level should be able to do. For example, if Fred is a Professional Carpenter, building a chair or a kitchen table is simple and does not require a Draw. If you attempt to accomplish something beyond your level, a Draw must be made, based on your Skill and the Difficulty of the undertaking.

Skills List

Physical
Acrobatics
Climbing
Explosives*
Firearms
Hand-to-Hand Combat
Melee Combat
Riding*
Sleight-of Hand
Stealth
Swimming*

Mental
Academia*
Art
Awareness
Gambling
Linguistics*
Literacy
Music
Psychoanalysis
Science*

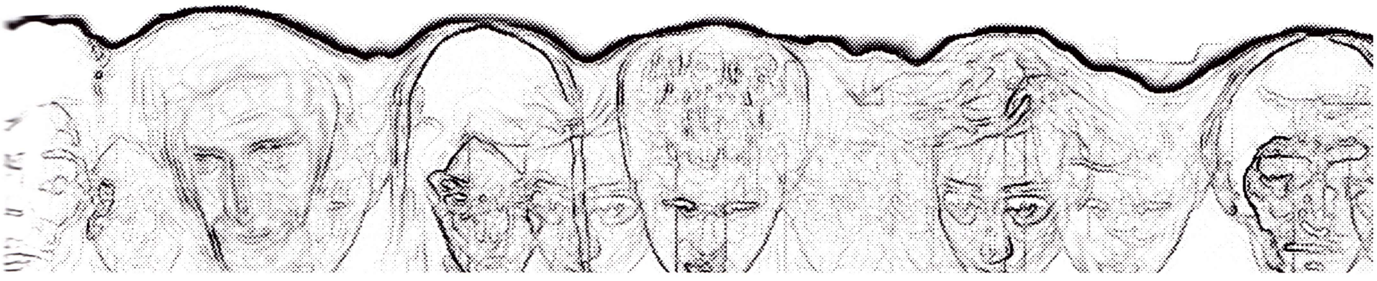
Occupational
Animal Handling*
Boating*
Carpentry
Driving*
Dye-making*
Electrician
Electronics*
Farming*
Mechanics*
Medicine
Plumbing
Sewing
Toolsmithing*

* Restricted Skill — must be cleared by the gamemaster beforehand.

Physical:

Acrobatics: The character's knowledge of, and experience with, gymnastics and other limbering techniques. This Skill can be used to Dodge attacks, as well as for escaping ropes and other binding devices, and for trying to fit through odd spaces (air ducts and the like). Acrobatics can also be combined with Art to indicate skill in dancing.

Climbing: Measures the character's ability to climb, usually along ver-



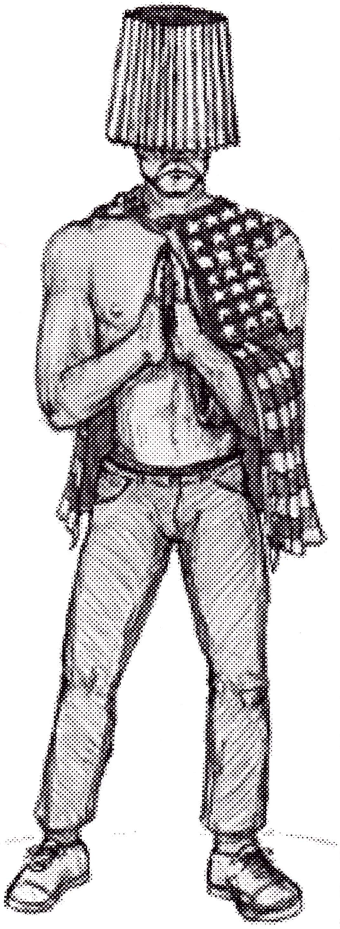
tical surfaces. This can cover both barehanded climbing, and the use of grappling hooks, pitons, and other equipment. Specialties can include rock climbing, ice climbing, and even building climbing.

Explosives: The ability to create explosives out of the necessary ingredients and to set explosives for jobs of varying sizes, from blowing open a small door to vaporizing a house. This also includes knowledge of various types of explosives, their degree of detonation, and the best methods for using them. **This is a restricted Skill.**

Firearms: The character's ability to shoot a firearm, as well as to clean and load one. Firearms include any personal weapon that has mechanically-assisted projectiles (not bows and slings, which are muscle-powered). Note that every character automatically has a one (Novice) in this Skill.

Hand-to-Hand Combat: Familiarity with unarmed combat techniques, including throws, holds, kicks, and punches.

Melee Combat: The use of handheld combat weapons that rely solely on the user's own muscles — this covers everything from knives and swords to staves and spears to bows and crossbows. This Skill does not allow a character to make or fix a weapon — that would fall under Toolsmithing.



Riding: The ability to control an animal and use it for transportation — this normally is used for horses, but could also apply to elephants, camels, dolphins, and any other available animal that is big enough to fit the character on its back. At lower levels characters will still need proper equipment (saddle, bit, stirrups, etc.), while at upper level they are able to control creatures through knee movements and shifting their weight, and can ride bareback. **This is a restricted Skill, and utterly unavailable inside a Ward.**

Sleight-of-Hand: The ability to manipulate small objects (cards, coins, wallets) faster than the eye can see, and, if this involves removing (or adding) items from another person, usually without that person feeling the object's absence (or presence).

Stealth: The ability to move silently and to stick to shadows, in order to avoid attracting notice — this covers both the outdoors and the urban environment, and can also be used to do things unobtrusively (like drawing a gun in a restaurant without anyone noticing).

Swimming: The ability not only to tread water but to actually move confidently in the water, both when totally submersed and when floating on top. This includes diving but not deep-sea diving, and covers a general knowledge of what not to do when swimming (eating right before, diving into a freezing pond on a hot day, getting the bends, etc.). **This is a restricted Skill.**

Mental:

Academia: This covers all of the recognized areas of academic study, from literature to philosophy — it also includes the general ability to do research in a library environment, to take notes, and to write papers. Suggested specialties include Literature, History, Religion, and Philosophy — note that these are always abstract fields, without much practical purpose or use. **This is a restricted Skill.**

Art: This covers all of the creative fields where the only purpose is to please and entertain. Characters with this Skill have an appreciation of art, an understanding of the basic concepts behind most art forms, and even a vague idea of the history involved (more specific knowledge on that would require Academia, Art History). They are also proficient in one art form themselves. Specialties include Dance (with Acrobatics), Writing (with Academia or Literacy), Costuming (with Sewing), and Painting.

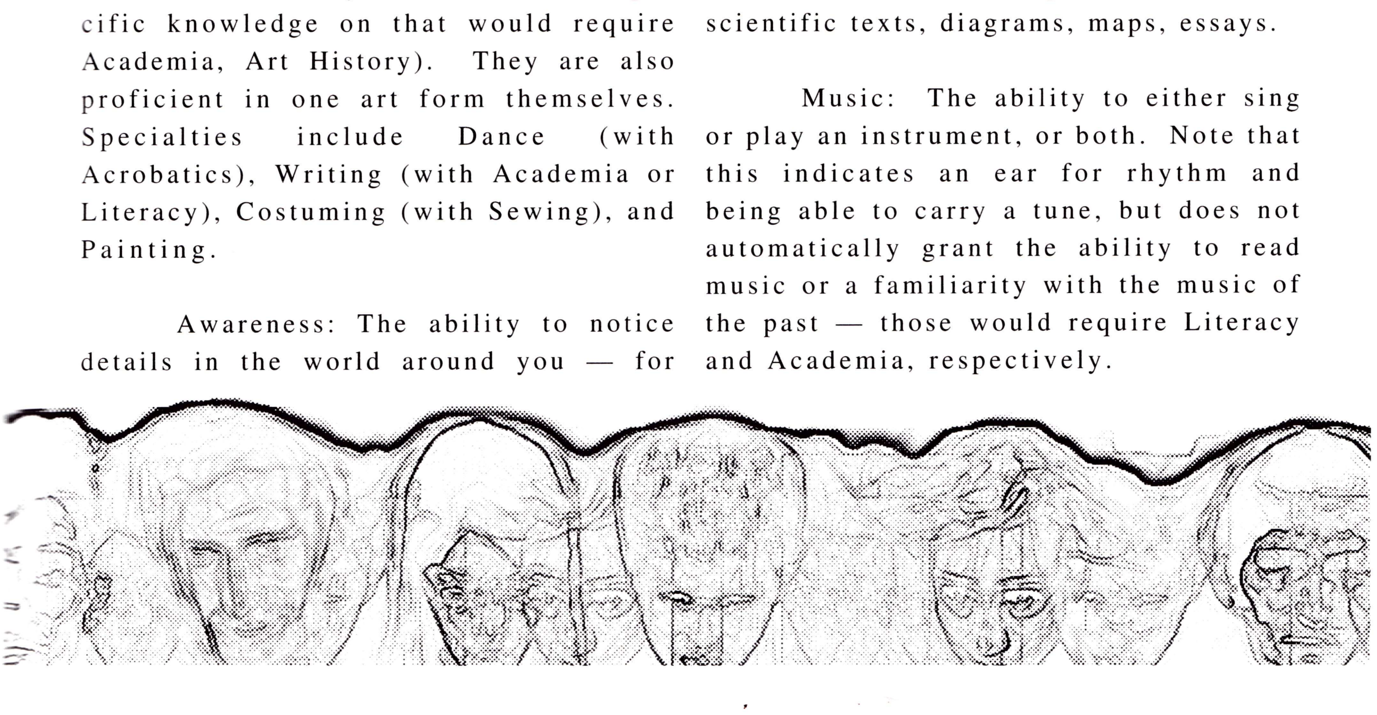
Awareness: The ability to notice details in the world around you — for example, to see that the man in the blue hat has been following you, or that a woman across the street just stole a gun from the Round.

Gambling: An understanding of games of chance — primarily card-based games, die-based games, and games of random chance. This Skill gives the character some familiarity in playing such games, and at higher levels it allows the character to instruct others on the rules.

Linguistics: A character's knack for and understanding of languages, and his or her skill in a specific language, both written and spoken. Specialties may be any language, including Spanish, German, Sign Language, and Braille.

Literacy: This is the ability to read and write at an advanced level. Most Inmates have basic literacy — the ability to read street signs and simple directions and to write simple notes to one another. However, very few have studied enough to be able to decipher the old texts that still litter the Wards, or to exchange more sophisticated information in written form. Specialties include scientific texts, diagrams, maps, essays.

Music: The ability to either sing or play an instrument, or both. Note that this indicates an ear for rhythm and being able to carry a tune, but does not automatically grant the ability to read music or a familiarity with the music of the past — those would require Literacy and Academia, respectively.



Psychoanalysis: This is the remnant of the ability to recognize and treat mental and psychological maladies. There is no longer a profession to match this, because with the entire country insane there seemed little point in trying to treat them — even if someone were "cured," where could they go? This Skill, however, still has its uses. It can be used to identify someone's Disorder and even Aberrations, and this allows the character a bit of insight into the other person's mind and a chance to predict what sort of thing that person may do next. It is by no means an exact science, but it is better than nothing.

Science: This Skill, like Academia, covers a wide variety of disciplines — it can be used for any science that affects real objects and has real consequences (Biology, Chemistry, Physics), as well as for abstract ones that are purely theoretical in application (Quantum Physics, Chaos Theory). **This is a restricted Skill.**

Occupational:

Animal Handling: This is the ability to relate to and handle animals, and even to train them — it covers how to care for an animal properly, and how to calm them into docility. It does not, however, include the ability to ride larger animals (which would be Riding), or the ability to mend severe injuries (that would fall under Medicine, with a Veterinary specialty). **This is a restricted Skill.**

Boating: The ability to handle (equip and pilot) water-based vehicles, such as yachts, sailboats, canoes, etc. **This is a restricted Skill.**

Carpentry: Creating structures and furniture out of wood. This does not include sculpture or highly detailed pieces — that would require Art as well — but covers basic furnishings (chairs, desks, etc.) as well as door frames, building supports, and even wooden houses.

Driving: The character's familiarity with handling a car or other land vehicle. In general, characters need a Drive of at least 2 to be able to handle a vehicle with manual transmission, and at least a 3 to handle something with multiple gears (such as a bus or large truck). Motorcycles are covered by this Skill, and can be handled at first level. **This is a restricted Skill.**

Dye-Making: The knowledge of what materials will stain a fabric, both permanently and temporarily, and the methods used to create such pigments. This Skill can **only** be taken by Weavers — no one else understands cloth and color enough to learn how to mix dye, and the secret is jealously guarded.

Electrician: This is the ability to understand, build, and repair electrical wiring, such as lighting systems, heating and cooling systems, and possibly alarm systems (an alarm box, however, would be under Electronics).

Electronics: Knowledge of the inner workings of electronic devices.

and how to build, destroy, alter, and fix them. This is strictly hardware-based, and does not cover things like programming or extended external wiring. Specialties include Televisions, Cameras, Computers, and Security Systems. **This is a restricted Skill.**

Farming: The practice of growing foodstuffs — not only grains but also fruits and vegetables. **This is a restricted Skill.**

Mechanics: The knowledge of how vehicles work and the ability to build, alter, and fix them. Specialties include Automobiles, Planes, and Boats. Note that this does not mean a character can rebuild a carburetor with a paper clip and a piece of chewing gum — the proper tools are still required, but the character will know which tools are needed and how to use them effectively. **This is a restricted Skill.**

Medicine: Knowledge of how the human body works, what can damage it, and how to fix that damage (and, also, when that damage is irreparable). Specialties include First Aid (focuses on short-term help), Surgery, Pediatrics, and Dentistry — this can also be taken for nonhumans, by specializing in Veterinary (that, however, is a Restricted specialty). Note that, in Asylum, Medicine is all that is left of the entire medical field — there are no longer separate areas such as Anesthesiology and Radiology.

Plumbing: Understanding of pipes and how to connect them properly, as well as the workings of such water-based devices as sinks, toilets, hot water heaters, and water fountains. Someone with this Skill can assemble a system of running water with minimal tools and piping.

Sewing: The crafting and repairing of woven or sewn materials, such as clothes, shoes, and blankets. This covers adjusting them to fit better, altering them to appear differently, repairing damage, reinforcing material, and even drawing up patterns for and creating new garments.

Toolsmithing: This is the ability to create small tools and equipment, from hammers and wrenches to syringes and guns. Note, however, that in order to fix

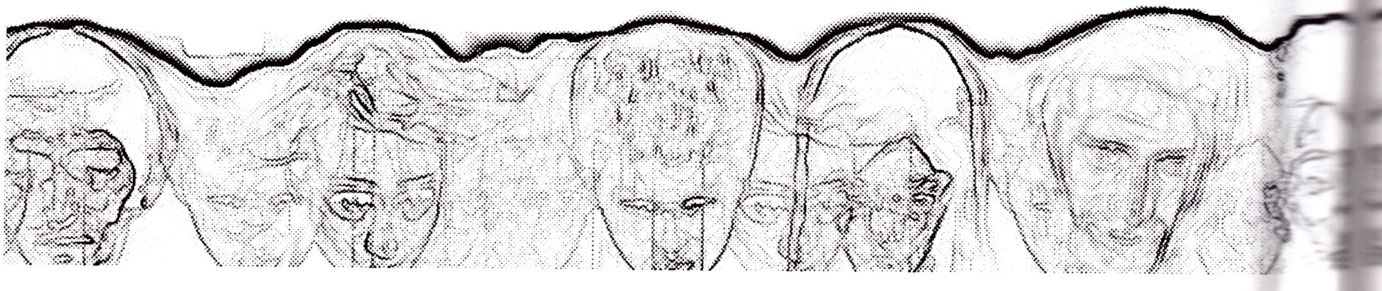
or build specialized devices like weapons or medical equipment it is necessary to have some knowledge of that Skill yourself, so that you know how the object works and why. **This is a restricted Skill.**

Occupational Hazards

As stated earlier, Inmates who have an Occupation are more focused, less unbalanced, than those who do not. Having an Occupation does not mean merely having the appropriate Skills, but actively practicing the trade — knowing medicine does not make one a Patch. If you choose to take an Occupation, you can reduce the number of Aberrations your character has by one. Note, however, that if your character is ever forced to give up his or her occupation or simply stops practicing it, you must select a new Aberration at that time, as the free time begins to eat away at the character's sanity.

The necessary Skills do not come with the Occupation, but must be bought separately. However, having an Occupation does allow you to start out with an additional Skill at level three and even one at level four, if you choose — see the section below on Skill points.

There is always the question of inheritance — what masters give a disciple when he or she is ready to begin practicing the occupation alone (most only have the time, and the patience, to take a single student under their wing). Unfortunately, in Asylum, it is often catch-as-catch-can. Most masters have gathered their tools and texts painstakingly throughout their lives, and unless



they are extremely wealthy or extremely lucky they will not have an entire set to pass on. Usually they can offer a few tools and/or a few reference materials — those that they have replaced with better ones at some previous point — and the apprentice must find the remaining necessities on his or her own. However, when a master dies, he or she will usually bequeath materials to the disciple (or divide it up amongst them if there are more than one). Of course, some occupations are easier to outfit than others — Almanacs don't need much beyond their own mind and their mouth, and Weavers usually start out with only a needle, some thread, and a few old scraps of cloth. Everything else has to be found, bought, or traded for.

Occupations:

Almanac: In a world where new gangs spring up every day (sometimes wholly new configurations and sometimes just an old group with a new name), and where some places are safe to sleep and others aren't even safe to walk, it's important to know what is going on around you. That's what Almanacs are for. They patrol the streets, talking with all of their contacts and exchanging news of the immediate area for other information, and building up a mental image of the entire Ward — safe and unsafe areas, where to go to get something, who to talk to, etc. They generally exchange information for either other information (if they don't already know it) or for small items that they can then trade in turn. Most Almanacs never write down their information, to avoid the danger of being ripped off and replaced — they work only verbally, face to face. Required Skills: Awareness, Deduction. Recommended Skills: Bargain, Psychoanalysis, Stealth.

Crafter: The buildings in a Ward are old and run-down, and often need repairs, both to keep such valuable features as running water and working lights and often simply to remain structurally sound. The Staff doesn't care to look after such things, so Crafters have emerged to handle them instead. Most Crafters have at least a little knowledge about the general features of a building, gleaned from both old books and personal instruction, and can deal with any problem at hand. Some Crafters prefer to specialize, however, focusing in only one area. This is particularly true of carpentry — these are the men and women who actually build new furniture, rather than just repairing the old. Required Skills: Carpentry, Electrician, Plumbing (at least a one in each). Recommended Skills: Climbing, Electronics, Science.

Fieldhand: Every inmate has heard of Fields, though none have been there, and so they also have tales of the Fieldhands, those almost-mythical men and women who live and work in Fields, raising the animals and tending the plants that the rest of Asylum lives upon. Since becoming a Fieldhand is hereditary, the only two ways a character can possibly have this occupation are if a) the episode is set in Fields, or b) he/she is a former Fieldhand who became fed up with the seclusion of Fields life and fled

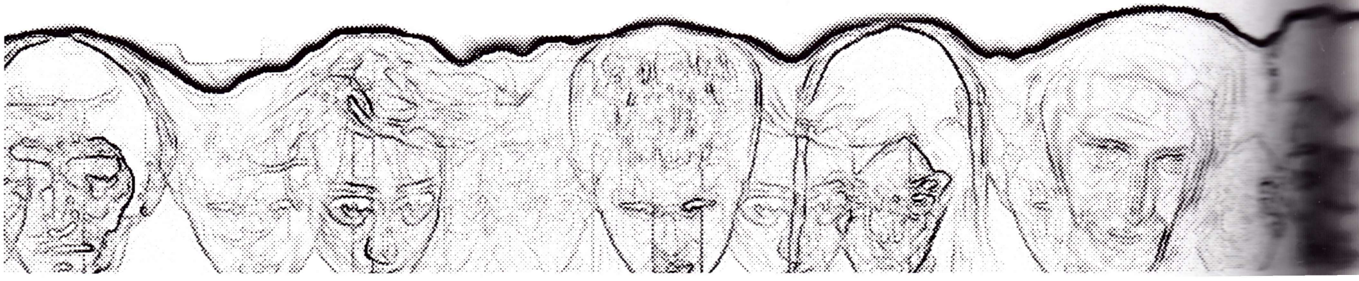
to seek more interesting opportunities. However, since Fieldhands aren't fit for anything but working in Fields, and since all of Fields is not only heavily guarded but also surrounded by Wastelands, it is unlikely that such a runaway would survive to reach even the nearest Ward. Still, stranger things have happened . . . .

If a PC is a Fieldhand, dealing with Disorders and Aberrations must be handled slightly differently. This is because Fields has better living conditions and simulated natural sunlight. Fieldhands start out with no Disorders at all. However, during the Escalation process (see page **107**, below) they draw for an Aberration at Medium strength, and do the same during their second Escalation. After that, they have acclimated — which means that they are as insane as everyone else around them, roughly speaking — and Escalate as normal.

Fieldhands are trained in all basic farm techniques, both for livestock and for crop production. They are taught enough reading and writing to follow simple directions (as with most Inmates) and occasionally have rudimentary knowledge of medicine, in case of injury. However, they are even more sheltered than Inmates in Wards, and know virtually nothing of the world outside, nor do most wish to — Fields is the most desirable spot in Asylum, and that much they are told almost from birth. Required Skills: Animal Handling, Farming. Recommended Skills: Riding, Swimming, Medicine.

Fixer: In a world like Asylum, where medicine is not only a form of escape and entertainment but also a type of currency, drug dealers are figures of great importance. Fixers are the ones who obtain supplies of tranquilizers, uppers, downers, hallucinogens, and any other type of drug they can get their hands on — they are also the only supply for antibiotics, and so usually have some sort of arrangement with the Patches in their area. Fixers accept both doses and bullets as well as other drugs in trade, and they're always willing to buy — however, most of them do have certain standards, and they won't accept anything they think might be doctored, nor will they rat on their own sources (Wardens occasionally have strange notions about cleaning up their Wards, and drugs then become one of their favorite targets). Required Skills: Awareness. Recommended Skills: Stealth, Medicine.

Patch: The Clinic is where all of the Staff doctors live and work, and in theory it provides free care for everyone within the Ward — in reality, however, they help Staff first and then any Inmates they have space for and feel the urge to aid, and even then they will only assist people with life-threatening dis-



eases or wounds. The one exception to this is pregnancy — the Clinic is pledged to preserve new lives at any cost, and they will never turn away a woman in labor, regardless of other factors. Despite all of this, the Clinic often fills up quickly, and because it is located in the heart of each Ward it may be too far away to reach in time, regardless. This is where Patches come in. Patches are the non-Clinic doctors — fellow Inmates who have taken up the art of medicine and practice it on whoever comes to them. They don't possess the specialized equipment that the Clinic has, being forced to rely upon what they can steal, buy, or get Tinkers to build for them, but they always have a good supply of drugs from a local Fixer and are well-versed in basic medicine. And Patches don't ask questions about how you got that knife-wound or why. Required Skills: Medicine, Deduction. Recommended Skills: Awareness, Literacy, Sewing.

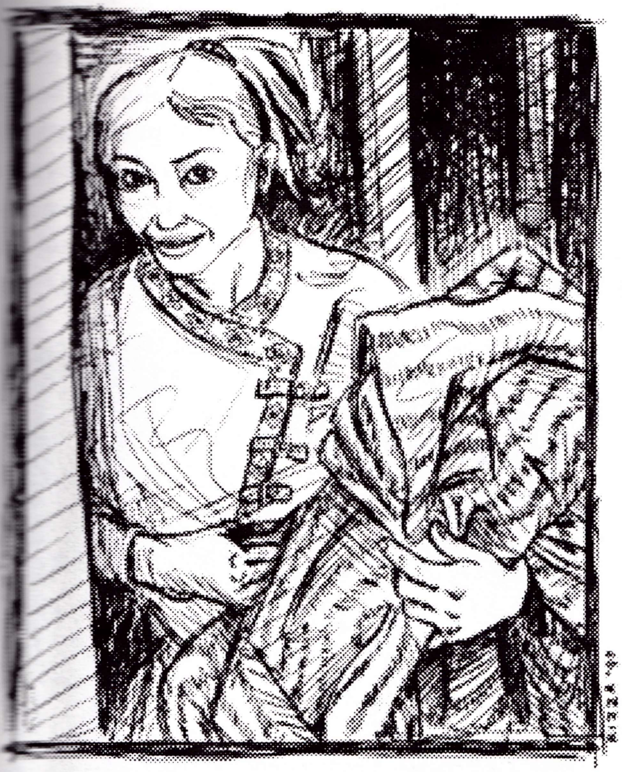
Round: Although bullets are used as a form of currency, guns are not terribly common — Staff sometimes toss them to Inmates, more as a form of amusement than due to any generosity, and others are stolen from museums or even built by industrious Tinkers, but they are still hard to come by. Rounds are the people who acquire such weapons, tracking them in much the way that Almanacs track information and then buying or trading for them. Each Round has a workplace somewhere where Inmates can go and buy, sell, or trade for a gun. Rounds don't usually deal in melee weapons, although they will if someone requests one and has the money to pay for it. They also don't often carry non-standardized guns — that is, guns that use something other than 9mm ammunition. They do, however, guarantee that any weapon they sell is in working order, and they will stake their reputation on it.

Of course, Rounds often deal in bullets as well, not only taking them as a form of payment (some, in fact, will only accept bullets) but also trading for them in the same way they trade for guns. Because of this, and because bullets are a form of Asylum currency, Rounds are often similar to old-style banks — Inmates can go to them to either trade bullets for doses or vice-versa, and some Rounds even run a sort of pawnshop business on the side, trading bullets for non-weapon merchandise which they then sell to any interested parties. Not all Rounds engage in such practices, but the ones who do hold a higher place in Inmate society, being the closest thing to a financial center. Required Skills: Bargain, Awareness. Recommended Skills: Explosives, Toolsmithing.

Scribe: In the Age of the Insane, computers survive only as strange relics, and with no phones there are no computer networks, internets, or World Wide Webs (although some clever Tinkers have cobbled together linked monitors and walkie-talkies for personal communications). Libraries still exist, but are either locked and abandoned, in ruins from some long-past riot, or used as sleeping quarters. Very few people care much about history or past knowledge, interested only in whatever they need to survive or in anything directly related to their own occupational field. Scribes are the exception to that rule. They are fascinated with the past, with learning and understanding facts and details that have no practical use, and with attempting to understand every aspect of pre-Asylum life. Sometimes Scribes attempt to reproduce devices or processes from the past, and their discoveries are occasionally useful, but for the most part they spend their lives in books, tracking down the past and updating records that only others of their own kind have any interest in. Required Skills: Academia, Science. Recommended Skills: Deduction, Linguistics. Note that some Scribes have particular areas of interest, and can have other restricted Skills such as Medicine and Mechanics at low levels, having read on the subject but never practiced it themselves.

Shark: These are the gamblers of Asylum. It is an ages-old profession that has, in the post-Sanity world, finally come to gain a measure of respect and credibility equal to most other occupations. Sharks ply their trade almost exclusively in the Sharks' Den in the Lounge, although there are sometimes a few tables set up on the Mall — but this is only because it is easiest to function from a single set location, rather than because society has forced them into hiding away in a corner. A lot of Inmates know how to gamble and how to play some of the games of chance that are still popular — what Sharks excel at is the combination of game knowledge and interpersonal Skills, the ability to set up and maintain a game that not only draws interest but also provides enjoyment, even to those who lose. Sharks actually pride themselves on their honor as gamedealers — very few cheat, and if a Shark ever discovers that another is cheating he/she will usually publicly denounce that individual. Then the rest of the Sharks will investigate the situation, and if the claim is true they will exact their own justice on the culprit, usually involving broken limbs and sometimes damaged sensory organs. Required Skills: Awareness, Gambling, Sleight-of-Hand. Recommended Skills: Literacy, Psychoanalysis.

Tinker: Tinkers are the men and women who build and create things, as well as fix broken ones. Everything they work on is small and portable, but beyond that it may range from guns to security systems to energized roller skates. They are the inventors — the ones people go to whenever some sort of mechanical device is needed — and if a particular tinker doesn't have any experience with the item in question he or she will either experiment with it anyway or suggest another tinker who does. Required Skills: Electronics,

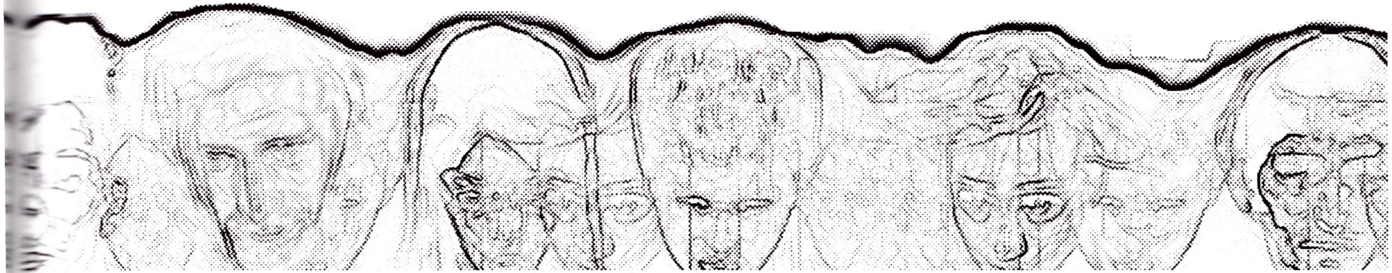


Toolsmithing. Recommended Skills: Electrician, Explosives, Mechanics, Literacy.

Tug: These extremely rare individuals exist only along the shorelines where boats are in use, and most of them are actually some variety of Staff, working on supply boats. However, there are some freelancers still around, having built or stolen their own small boats, and they make their living ferrying people along the coast and — for the braver or more desperate — attempting the trek across the ocean in the hope of finding some place worth landing on the other side. Required Skills: Boating, Mechanics. Recommended Skill: Swimming. (Note that, if the GM agrees, it is possible to be a "ground tug," meaning someone who has jury-rigged or stolen — from the Factors, which would be an impressive feat! — a bus-like vehicle and runs people back and forth between Wards, living and operating in the Wastelands. If this is the case, take Driving instead of Boating.)

Tune: Asylum is an energetic place, colorful and loud, and music of all varieties abounds. Many Inmates play instruments or sing simply for their own amusement, but others dedicate their lives to making music and to offering that music to other people. These are the Tunes. Most simply wander the Ward, playing and accepting any donations people care to make, taking requests sometimes and other times just letting their own creativity flow through their instruments and their voices. Some set up at a particular spot, like in a corner of the Mall or near a train platform, and set out a hat or basket or plate for donations. But the money is secondary — Tunes express themselves through their music, and they thrive on the response (and, hopefully, approval) of others to their work, often adjusting their playing to the mood and make-up of their audience. Required Skills: Awareness, Music. Recommended Skills: Academia, Literacy, Carpentry, Art.

Weaver: Although the Looms of each Ward provide clothing for its Inmates, those clothes are of generic size and design, well-constructed and durable but bland and unappealing. The Weavers attempt to correct all of those problems. They have no cotton or yarn to create new garments out of, but they collect and buy cast-off clothes and use the pieces to



create new garments, as well as altering existing clothes so that they fit better, are more comfortable, and have a more distinctive look to them. Surprisingly, Weavers are in great demand — in a place where almost everything is institutionalized, they help create individuality, and that is valued highly, especially since dementia adds to one's sense of uniqueness. Required Skills: Sewing, Art. Recommended Skills: Awareness, Dye-making, Psychoanalysis.

Quirks

These are personality traits that deviate from the theoretical "norm," but they are not as visibly intrusive into daily activities as most Disorders and are less spectacular and more self-directed than Aberrations (although more constant in effect). Quirks are the sort of traits that only show up in certain situations/conversations, whereas Disorders are always present and Aberrations, even at their mildest, still have a pervasive effect.

Domineering: You like to be in control and to order others around. You hate following anyone else's lead, and will try to assume leadership.

Hypochondriac: You are convinced that you are ill — usually with several different diseases all at once. You are also convinced that various substances — like the food, the water, the air — are making you sick. You are so convinced of this that you actually show some symptoms of your chosen illnesses.

Passive-Aggressive: You have deep feelings of worthlessness and attempt to sabotage your own actions by such passive approaches as procrastination, stubbornness, deliberate absent-mindedness, and deliberate incompetence. However, you still manage to get your way by subtly sabotaging the actions of those around you, especially those people you want attention from.

Masochistic: You enjoy pain, particularly when someone else inflicts it upon you. This does not mean that you are suicidal — you don't want to die, or

even to suffer any potentially lethal injuries. You just enjoy the adrenaline rush from being in pain, and you may even feel that you deserve such poor treatment.

Narcissistic: You consider yourself to be the most beautiful person in the world, and the most charming. You love to stare at yourself in mirrors for hours, and to compliment yourself on your appearance (and, to a lesser degree, on your abilities and accomplishments). You are so taken with yourself that you may have trouble paying attention to other people, especially if they don't feel the same way about you.

Sadistic: You like to inflict pain on others. This is not a homicidal impulse (wanting to kill them) or even a sociopathic one (not caring if they get hurt) — you enjoy seeing other people in pain, and you relish their cries and groans and grimaces.

Submissive: You like to have others tell you what to do. This is not the same as Dependent because you do not need to have someone else there with you at all times, but you do prefer to let others lead, and you like having people give you clear, direct orders and then force you to carry them out. You feel better knowing that you do not have to make your own decisions.

Any -philia or -mania, which is simply an overpowering love for a particular kind of thing, to the point where the character constantly attempts to surround him/herself with appropriate items. Examples include Necrophilia (the character has a love for dead things, and particularly for dead people — this usually [but not always] extends to the point of being sexually attracted to corpses), Altophilia (love of heights), and Bibliomania (love of books).

Any -phobia, which is an overwhelming fear of a particular object or situation. Examples are Claustrophobia (fear of enclosed spaces), Agoraphobia (fear of public places) and Ommatophobia (fear of eyes).

Details

Details represent those finishing touches to a character, the tiny aptitudes or weaknesses which are not so much learned as they are natural parts of the person's makeup, and which add depth to personality. Details are divided into Knacks — innate abilities or affinities — and Faults — natural ineptitudes or weaknesses. They are taken at Character Generation, and they do not increase or decrease with time, except in very unusual circumstances.

Knacks

black, black	Endurance
red, black	Direction Sense
red, red	Quick-Draw
green, red	Silent Footfall
green, green	Body Malleability
blue, green	Iron Digestion
blue, blue	Night Vision
white blue	Technical Affinity
white, white	Ambidexterity
white, black	Draw twice

Faults

black, black	Day-Blindness
red, black	Allergies
red, red	Hyperactive
green, red	Jinx Machinery
green, green	Noisy
blue, green	Clueless
blue, blue	Sluggishness
white, blue	Moon Fever
white, white	Speech Loss
white, black	Draw twice

Knack Explanations:

Endurance: The character has a high endurance, and a reduced need for sleep — he or she can get away with only a few hours of sleep a night without feeling tired or sluggish. This has nothing to do with Zeal or with health — it is sleep and not injury that is involved here.

Direction Sense: The character can always find the way home, unless he is in completely unfamiliar territor and/or was deliberately confused (lik by being blindfolded and then spun i circles) — even then, he can tell the general direction back, and once in recognizable surroundings can get hom again.

Quick-Draw: Lightning speed specifically when drawing a weapon whether it is a gun, a knife, or a fryin pan. The character can draw and attac as one action (note that this is only fo normal situations — it does not apply i

the weapon has been hidden, bound, or otherwise encumbered).

Silent Footfall: The character has a talent for moving quietly. Reduce the difficulty for Stealth Draws by one — two if barefoot. This, of course, does not apply if the character is using a skateboard or other transportation device. Nor does it affect moving things quietly — only walking.

Body Malleability: The character is double-jointed and able to bend and stretch more easily. Reduce the difficulty of any Acrobatics Draws by one —this is especially useful in attempts to slip free of restraints.

Iron Digestion: You are able to eat food that would make other people sick — food that has started to go moldy, mildly poisonous plants, etc. Ignore any ill effects from eating such things.

Night Vision: Your eyes adapt better to low-light conditions. Ignore penalties for dim lighting. Note that this does not allow you to see in complete darkness, however — there must be some light to adjust to.

Technical Affinity: A natural gift with all mechanical objects — cut normal repair times by 20%. This does not mean that a broken or missing part does not need to be replaced, but only that it is easier for you to diagnose the real problem and you can fix it in less time than most people would require.

Ambidexterity: Characters can use both hands equally well — ignore off-hand penalties to actions. This does not mean that they get twice as many actions, but only that they can act with either hand.

Fault Explanations:

Allergies: You are allergic to something, like cotton or wine or a certain drug. It must be something that is still encountered regularly — you cannot be allergic to antiperspirant, and *everyone* is allergic to electricity.

Hyperactive: You are constantly filled with energy, and are restless whenever you're not moving. Your words tumble over each other, and your motions are jerky, spastic — you hate waiting. Note that this does not have the same effect as Endurance, in regards to sleep — while you are awake you are bursting with energy, but you still need a full amount of sleep to regain that.

Day-Blindness: The character cannot adjust to bright light, and is disoriented by any exposure to it. Sunglasses, hoods, caps, and bandages ease this slightly, but do not remove the penalties. Increase the difficulty of all Lucidity Draws by one when in such light.

Jinx Machinery: The character has a negative effect on mechanical items of any sort, from heating units to street lamps. Things tend to malfunction whenever the character is nearby, and to break when the character tries to use

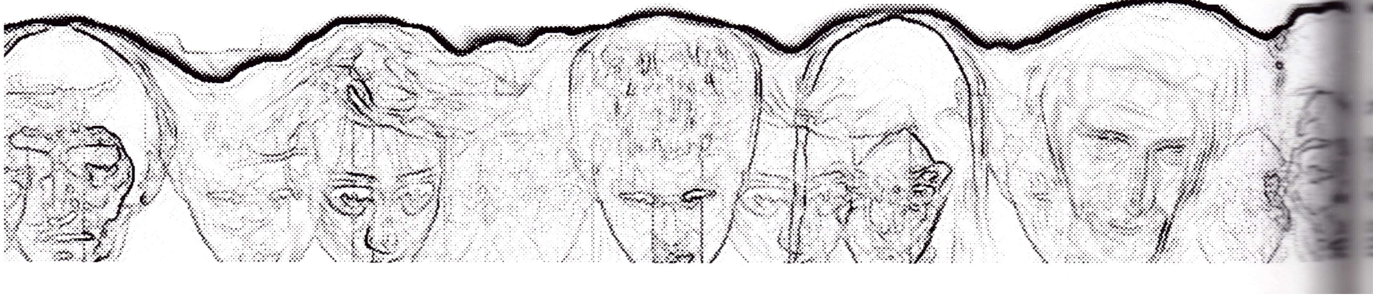
them. Having him or her attempt repairs is hopeless.

Noisy: You make noise wherever you go — not necessarily loud sounds, but sighs, snorts, gasps, shuffles, coughs, etc. Any sort of Stealth Draw is one difficulty higher for everyone with you — if you are by yourself and the place is otherwise silent, stealth is impossible (you stand out too much).

Clueless: You get constantly turned around whenever you're outside. You have to Draw Lucidity at Easy when within three blocks of your destination, Complicated when within a mile, and Hard any other time — if you fail the Draw, you cannot find your way (sometimes even heading in exactly the opposite direction).

Sluggishness: The character's joints are stiff, and it is a challenge to bend, walk, etc. Increase the difficulty on all Stealth Draws and all Acrobatic Draws by one. Also, all Movement rates are reduced by half. This does not affect the character's ability to dodge, since that is as much a factor of reaction time as it is of limberness.

Moon Fever: The character loses control of him- or herself during the



full moon. Every time there is a full moon, Draw Lucidity at Hard to avoid falling into a wild frenzy. Characters who succeed retain self-control, but Draw again every hour until dawn. Those who fail attack everyone near them, and then run off into the night, attacking anyone they encounter.

Speech Loss: You cannot form proper words — this may be due to a physical condition, or (more likely) a psychological one. You are still capable of growls, whistles, whines, and other animal noises, and you can read and write properly. Words simply won't come out of your mouth.

Status

Inmate society, though chaotic, is nonetheless a society, and in any society there are individuals who are considered more important, influential, powerful, etc. and others who are considered less so. Players may choose to take Status for their characters, to define how well-known, well-connected, and well-respected the character is. Your Status can change during the game, due to circumstances, but if this happens you neither gain nor lose points for it. Note, however, that even if you buy a particular type of Status when generating your character, you still have to roleplay the situation in order to keep it.

Positive Status Features:

Rich: Make an additional Draw at the start of the game, and add the result to your character's number of Bullets.

Respected: People know you and admire you and your ability. You can actually wear red without being constantly challenged.

Group: You are part of an organized social group (like the Knights Errant) and can call on them for aid when necessary.

Group Leader: You are the head of an organized social group, and can order them to do things, within reason (for example, you cannot order your pacifistic group to attack someone). You can also wear red, although you will be challenged by rivals. **This Status feature takes two slots, and costs 8 points.**

Negative Status Features:

Poor: You have no starting money at all.

Despised: Other Inmates know who you are and actively dislike you. Few will associate with you at all, and even fewer will aid you in any way.

Hunted: A particular group has it in for you, and will chase you on sight. If its members catch you, they will beat you, kill you, or worse.

Parent: You have a child, or even another adult, who is completely dependent on you and whom you take care of.

Attitude

Everyone has an attitude of some sort — it's part of what makes each of us who we are. It's a vital part of every character, a summation of the way he or she views life and deals with people and situations. Most Attitudes can be exemplified by a single line or quote. Here are a few of the more common ones:

Bully: Out of my way, runt!

Caustic: Well, maybe *you* think so, but I happen to *have* a brain.

Cheerleader: That's great! I'm so proud of you!

Grumbler: Goddamn it, it's always the same . . .

Headliner: Hey, everyone, look at me!

Hoarder: He who dies with the most toys wins

Paragon: Of course we'll help — it's the right thing to do.

Ponderer: Everything has a deeper meaning

Pragmatist: Never mind the talk — this is what we need to do, right now.

Rebel: Don't go telling me what to do — I'll make my own decisions!

Recluse: Just leave me alone, okay?

Reminiscent: Back before the disaster, things were better. They . . .

Stylin': A Squad coming our way, left-handed? No problem — I'm cool.

Team Player: Hey, guys, whatcha doing? Can I go, too?

Trickster: Laughter is the key.

Character Generation

Conception:

First, work on a character concept, a mental picture of who this Inmate is and what he or she does from day to day. Is your character male or female? Does he or she have an Occupation?

Occupations

Almanac
Crafter
Fieldhand
Fixer
Patch
Round
Scribe
Shark
Tinker
Tug
Tune
Weaver

Next, draw on the Disorder Table — you have right of refusal if the Disorder does not fit your character concept. Also, note that, if the gamemaster allows it, it is possible to simply choose a Disorder that fits your character concept.

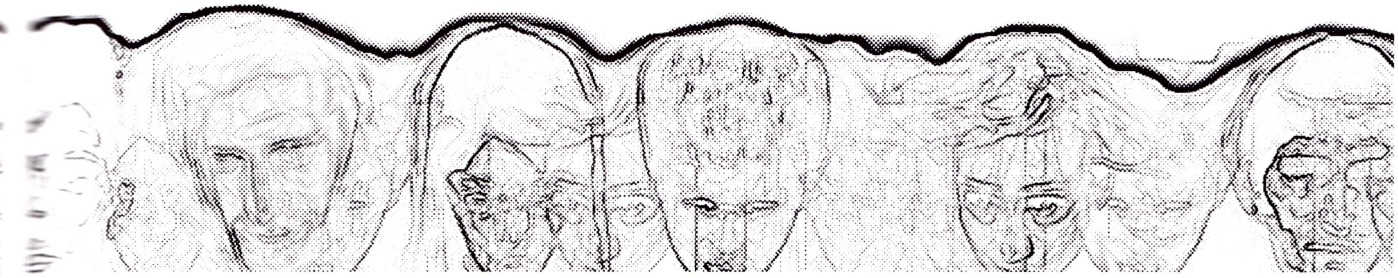
Disorders

black, black	draw twice (limit of once on this)
black, red	DID (Disassociative Identity Disorder)
red, red	Bipolar
red, green	Manic
white, black	Depressive
green, green	Sociopath
green, blue	Paranoid
blue, blue	Obsessive
blue, white	Psychotic
white, white	Compulsive

Now draw on the Aberration Table; again, there is a right of refusal. Unlike Disorders, though, Aberrations cannot be chosen — they must be Drawn, without exception. Even if you have an Occupation you must Draw — however, unless you draw "black, black" you will not actually start with an Aberration. If "blackblack" is Drawn in this case, you Draw a second time and gain whatever Aberration is indicated.

Aberrations

black, black	draw twice (limit of once on this)
black, red	Homicidal
red, red	Paranoid
green, black	Compulsive
red, green	Monomania
blue, black	Anal-Retentive
green, green	Kleptomania
blue, red	Narcolepsy
white, black	Pathological Liar
green, blue	Autistic
white, red	Dependent
blue, blue	Psychotic
green, white	Pyromania
blue, white	Exhibitionist
white, white	Honest



Vitals:

Next comes determining your Vital stats. There are two different ways to do this — either take a set pool of 11 and divide it among the Vitals as you choose, or Draw a single marker for each Vital and take the numerical equivalent (you can either place the Draws in the order you receive them or place them as you wish).

Lucidity
Fluidity
Aura
Zeal

Once you have your Vitals you can also determine your Resistance and your Movement, both of which are based on Zeal.

Skills:

The Skills are divided into three categories: Physical, Mental, and Occupational. Characters get as many Physical Skill points as they have Zeal, as many Mental as they have Lucidity, and as many Occupational as they have Fluidity. In addition, characters get 2 Skill points to be used any way they choose. Remember that every character automatically gets one free point in Firearms, because handguns are so prevalent — this point cannot be transferred. Skill points are spent on a one-to-one ratio — one point per level per Skill. However, a starting character without a profession may not have any Skills at four or five, and may only have a single Skill at three — with an occupation he or she may have two Skills at three and one at four, but those Skills must be either Required or Recommended for the Occupation in question.

Quirks, Details, and Status:

In order to flesh out your character, you can take personality traits that help bring your character to life — there are Quirks, which are minor mental disorders; there are Details, which are broken down into Knacks and Faults, and then there is Status. You have 4 points to use as you choose on Quirks (which cost 4 points each), Knacks (2 each), and positive Status (4 each, except for Group Leader, which costs 8); each Fault gives you 2 additional points to spend, and each negative Status gives you 4, but these points can only be applied to either Quirks, Details, or Status. A starting character is limited to a maximum of two Quirks, one Status (either negative or positive, but not both), and two apiece of Knacks and Faults. The Details do not usually change later on — Status, however, can be lost or gained, and Quirks can be added as the character develops.

Note that the Details tables (page 91) are set up in terms of a standard Draw, for people who wish to add either Knacks or Faults but don't know which ones to choose. Do note, however, that on these tables "white, black" does not equal "green, green," but is a category of its own.

Attitude:

Some people feel that this should be the first thing you do with characters, deciding what sort of personality they

have, but I disagree — attitude is shaped by what we can do, what has happened to us, and what we see and understand of the world around us. Because of this, it is the last part of the character generation process — you already know what sort of Disorders your character has, what sort of Aberrations, what Occupation if any, what Skills, what natural gifts or curses. After all those, you probably already have a pretty good idea of who this person is and how he or she acts normally. Now just assign the appropriate Attitude, or make up a new one if none of those listed fit.

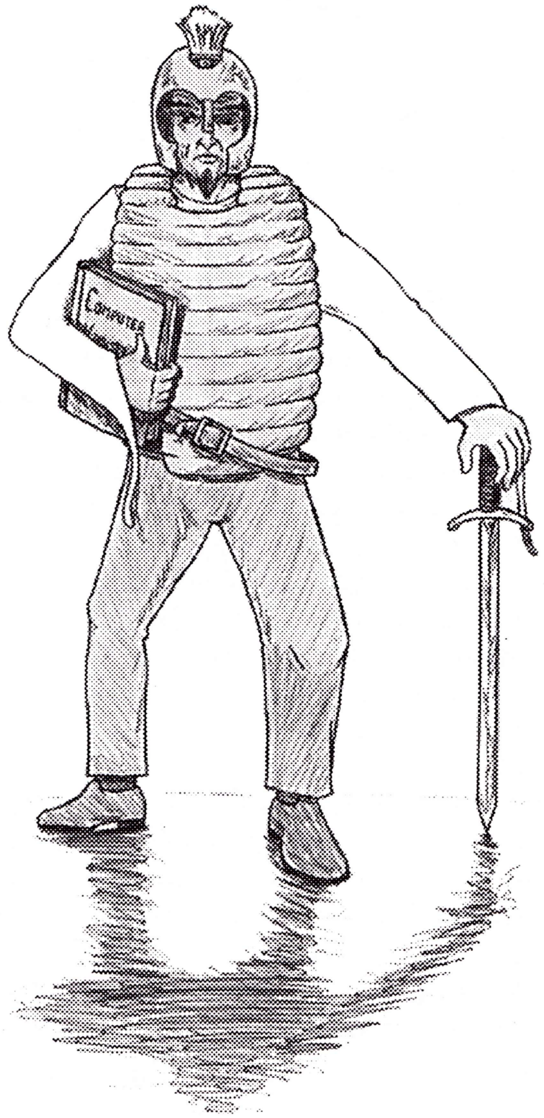
You've finished your basic character — now comes the question of equipment. What sort of weapons, tools, devices, books, etc. does your character possess? This is up to you and the gamemaster — make a list of what you think your character should actually be carrying, given age, Occupation, attitude, etc., and your GM will decide if it's reasonable. Some items may be too rare or valuable to simply allow out of hand, and starting scenes may need to be run to determine whether the character can possess such a thing or not.

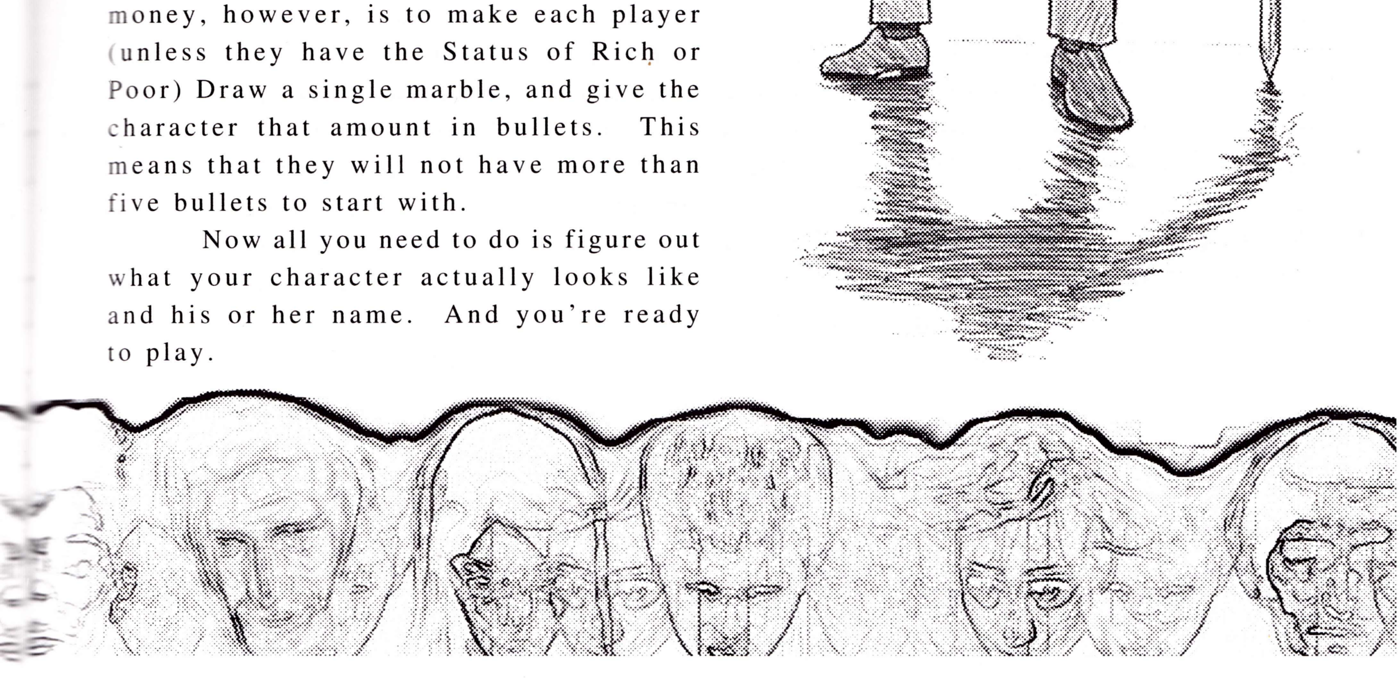
Starting money is also up to each GM, and will depend on the same factors. The most common method to determine money, however, is to make each player (unless they have the Status of Rich or Poor) Draw a single marble, and give the character that amount in bullets. This means that they will not have more than five bullets to start with.

Now all you need to do is figure out what your character actually looks like and his or her name. And you're ready to play.

Sample Character Generation: Alex

Alex is about to create his first *Asylum* character. He wants to play someone who thinks he is a medieval knight, like one of the Knights Errant, so he selects Psychotic for his Disorder. Initially he considers being a Scribe, devoting his time to the study of the





Middle Ages (and the knighthood in particular), but he changes his mind, reasoning that anyone who honestly believes that he is a knight will be far too busy performing knightly duties to sit and research past nobles, and so he opts not to take an Occupation.

Because he has no Occupation, Alex Draws for his Aberration. He winds up with "white, white" — Honest — which is a perfect complement to his persona.

Alex moves on to Vitals and decides to try his luck and Draw for them. He Draws, in succession, blue (4), green (3), green (3), and blue (4) — not a bad result, and far above the eleven points he could have taken. He distributes the scores. Because he wants his character to be strong, one of the fours goes to Zeal and the other goes to Fluidity. This leaves the threes to Lucidity and Aura. The character is stronger and faster than average, and as observant and charismatic as most. His Resistance is computed as 60 (12/20/8/16) and his Movement is 8/4 (the character doesn't know how to swim, so Alex ignores that stat).

After Vitals comes Skills. Alex has 4 points for Physical Skills, 3 points for Mental, and 4 for Occupational, plus 2 free points. He goes immediately for Melee Combat, placing 3 there so that his character can use his sword effectively. Then he adds Hand-to-Hand combat at 2 (using one of his free points), reasoning that a knight needs to know how to fight without weapons as well as with them. He uses his second free point to buy a Skill of 1 in Climbing. He also takes his complimentary 1 point for Firearms. For Mental Skills he takes Literacy at 2 and Deduction at 1.

At this point, Alex decides to flesh out his character concept a little. He determines that his knight's psychosis will be based on a pre-War book he has found about how to combat computer viruses. In the knight's addled mind, one kind of combat is just as good as another, and so he has sworn as his chivalrous mission to rid Asylum of these dreaded computer viruses (if he can ever find one). With this in mind, Alex asks his gamemaster for the restricted Occupational Skill of Electronics, arguing that the knight has gained this knowledge from the book he found. The request is denied. Instead he takes Electrician (which is not restricted) at 2, and puts his last two points in the Occupational Skill of Medicine.

Alex glances over the list of Quirks but decides against taking any. He considers the Negative Status of Hunted, saying that the Knights Errant view him as an impostor (because of his interest in electronics) and so have vowed to destroy him. However, after considering more carefully, Alex decides that the Knights are probably not that intelligent or that discerning. He decides instead that his character shuns *them*, believing that they are misguided and shortsighted. Finally, he decides to spend his two Quirk points on two Knacks — Ambidextrous and Iron Digestion. His choice for an Attitude, given both his Disorder and his Aberration, is fairly simple — Paragon.

Alex makes up a list of the items he wants for his character and presents it to the gamemaster: baseball catcher's chest plate, museum-replica Roman helmet, sword, Orderly's tazer glove, and a twentieth-century textbook on computer

viruses. The gamemaster grants everything except the glove, saying that such an object is far too rare and too valuable to simply be given, and can only be gained through roleplaying. Alex dubs his character "Sir Donald Quix, the Electric Knight." With that, the two of them — Alex and Sir Donald — are ready to seek adventure throughout the Ward!

Archetypes

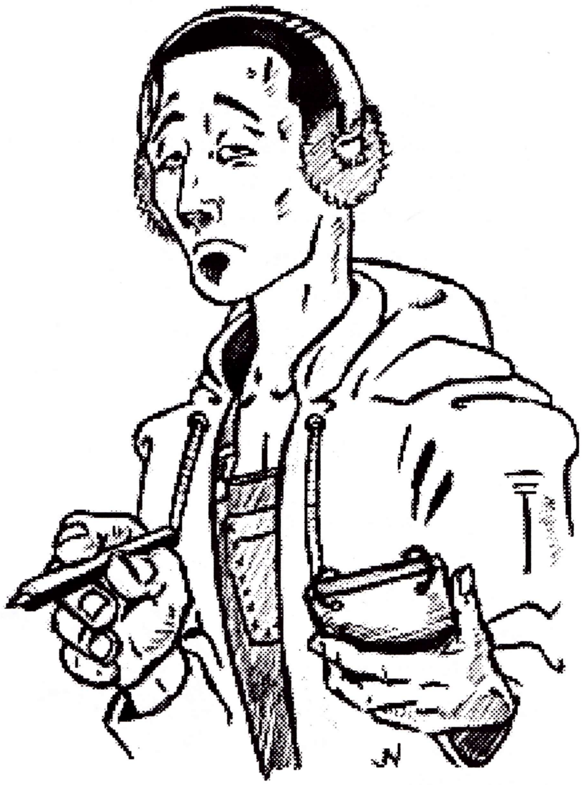
Here are some examples of characters, to give you a better understanding of the possibilities. These are by no means the only combinations available, nor are they necessarily the best for each Disorder or Occupation or Attitude — but they should give you some ideas.

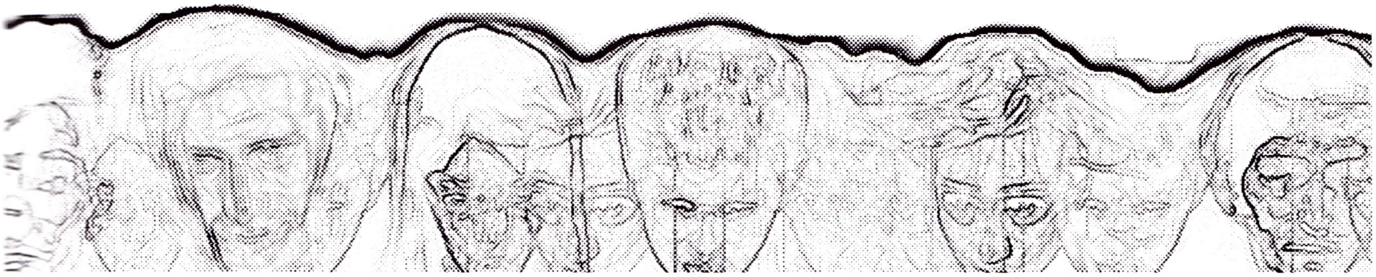
The Know-it-all

"You want info on who's running the streets these days, where it's safe to walk and who to see to get by . . . so of course you came to me. After all, I'm connected to everyone. If I don't know it, it ain't happening, and that's all there is to it."

Occupation: Almanac
Disorder: Monomania
Aberration: Obsessive
Attitude: Headliner
Vitals: Lucidity: 4
Fluidity: 2
Aura: 2
Zeal: 2
Movement: 4/2/-
Resistance: 30/6/10/4/8
Details: Hyperactive
Status: Respected
Equipment: notepad, pen, pistol, pocket knife, museum-replica spyglass, earmuffs, straitjacket with attached hood (pen tied to one arm strap, knife to the other) overalls, boots

There are a lot of things happening in the Ward, and no normal person could possibly find out about them all, let alone keep track of them. But you can. You're the best, and you live for each chance to prove it, to show off another piece of information, another tip or tidbit, to reveal to those around yet again why you are the only one capable of helping them. Hey, it's not your fault you're the best.



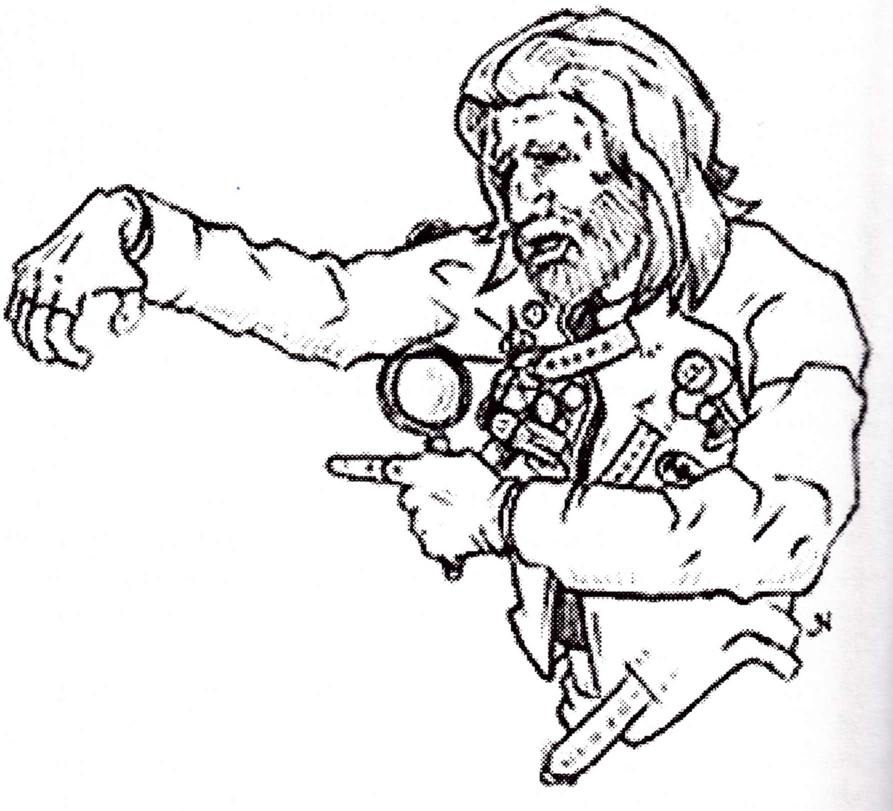


The Storyteller

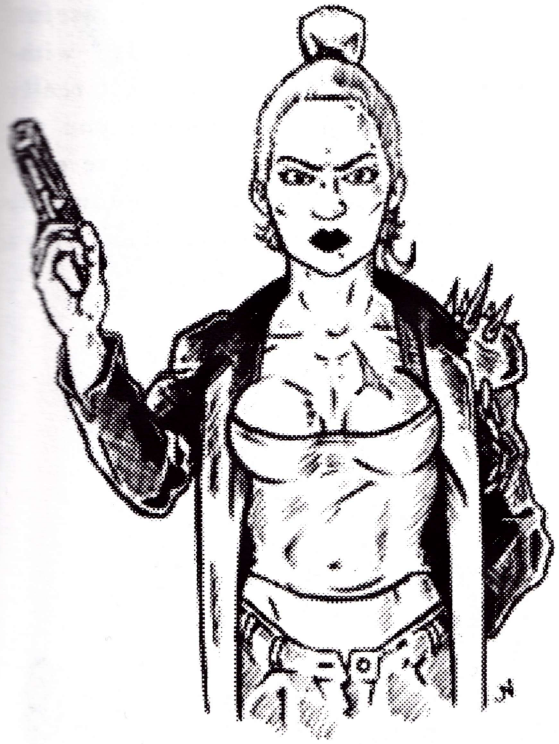
"It was wonderful back then, with their flying machines and their cars and their phones — everything was perfect! You have no idea how amazing it all was, but let me tell you about it . . . wait, where are you going? Don't leave me here! I haven't finished telling you about the old days yet!"

Occupation: Scribe
Disorder: Dependent
Aberrations: Manic, Obsessive
Attitude: Reminiscent
Vitals: Lucidity: 4
Fluidity: 1
Aura: 3
Zeal: 1
Movement: 2/1/-
Resistance: 15/3/5/2/4
Details: Clueless
Equipment: magnifying glass, Gideon's Bible, Viewfinder with "Age of the Dinosaurs" reel, three miscellaneous Polaroid pictures, old city map, straitjacket covered in old pins, pants, fingerless gloves, sandals

You're convinced that the pre-disaster days were the Golden Age of mankind, and you want everyone else to share your enthusiasm for it. You've painstakingly collected every scrap of information, every story, every picture you can find, and now you accost people and regale them with the history and legends of the past. In fact, you need to have people around to listen to you — without an audience your life has no meaning, and you can't stand to be alone for even an instant. There's far too much knowledge to impart to allow for silence.



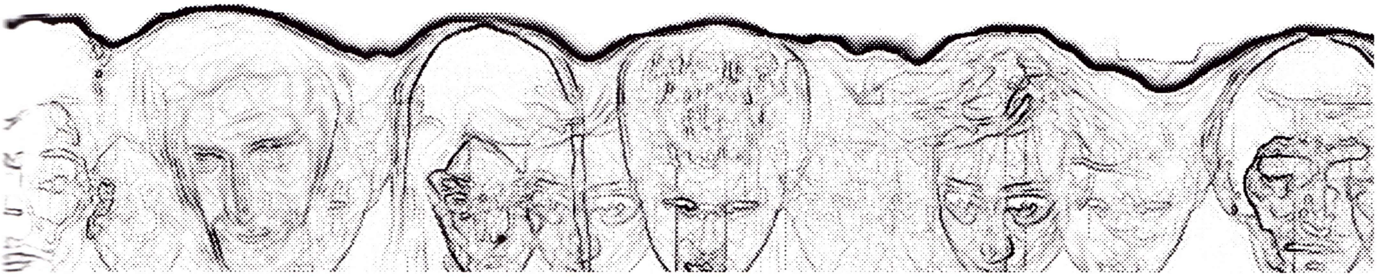
Street Tough



"Listen here, mate — I'm talking to you! This is our block, see — no one comes here without our permission. And you don't have it. So what we're going to do is play a little game, and if you do okay maybe we'll let you go. Got it? Right. Now, first set this ball on your head, and stand very still . . ."

Occupation: none
Disorder: Sociopath
Aberrations: Homicidal, Exhibitionist
Attitude: Bully
Vitals: Lucidity: 1
Fluidity: 3
Aura: 1
Zeal: 4
Movement: 8/4/-
Resistance: 60/12/20/8/16
Details: none
Status: Group
Equipment: pistol, knife, lead pipe, long bow, 6 arrows, brass knuckles, leather motorcycle jacket with spikes and bike chain, jeans, black leather boots, safety matches

All your life you've lived in the Ward, and ever since you could run from your parents you've been on the streets, hanging with friends and taking whatever you want from whoever has it. Why bother to work? The only things you really enjoy doing are killing people, showing off to your gang, putting the fear of you into the hapless Inmates. Hey, it's a good life.



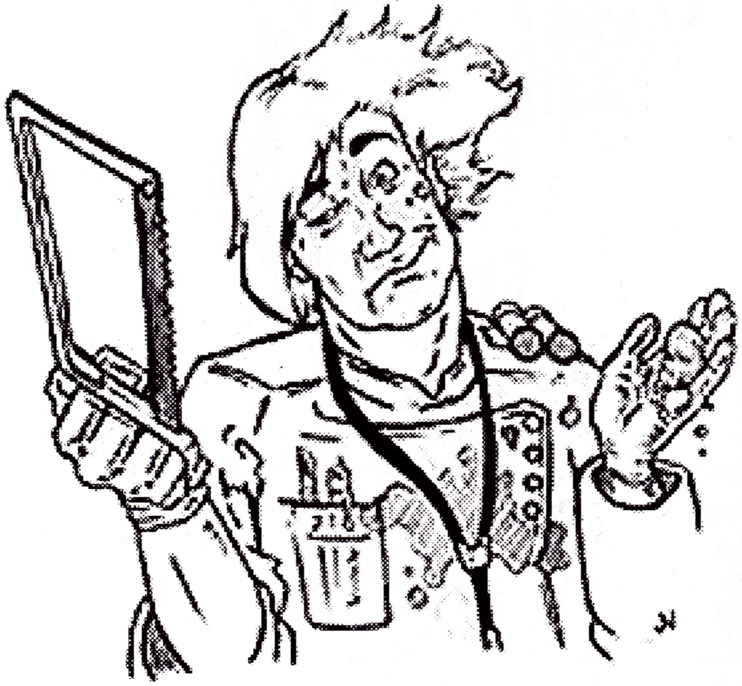
Dr. Hyde

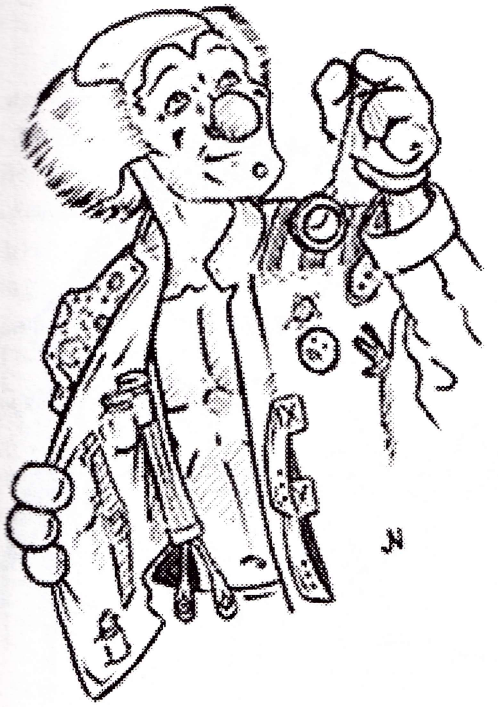
"You're going to be just fine. You'll experience a little pain for a while, until the antibiotics take care of that infection, but after that all you need is a little rest and everything should be okay. Trust me."

"Oh, what's the use? You're just going to die soon anyway. Sure, I can clear up that infection — and what were you doing that you contracted it, anyway? — but considering how malnourished you are I'd say you only have ten years left unless you make some major changes, and we both know you're not going to."

Occupation: Patch
Disorder: Bipolar
Aberration: Honest
Vitals: Lucidity: 2
Fluidity: 4
Aura: 2
Zeal: 2
Movement: 4/2/-
Resistance: 30/6/10/4/8
Details: Malleability, Ambidexterity
Equipment: scalpels, syringes, stethoscope, penlight, hacksaw, needles and thread, straitjacket with extra pockets sewn on, plastic gloves, face mask, black doctor's bag

You're a doctor, and a damn good one, and you always give your patients the straight truth — even when they'd rather not hear it. Emotionally, though, there are good days and there are bad days. On the good days you're charged up, energetic, optimistic, and everything is great — you help people because you want to make a difference, to be useful. On the bad days you're moody, withdrawn, pessimistic, and you don't really give a damn — the only reason you see patients is because it's what you're good at, and because they're foolish enough to want to prolong their useless lives. It's a hell of a way to make a living.





The Clown Dealer

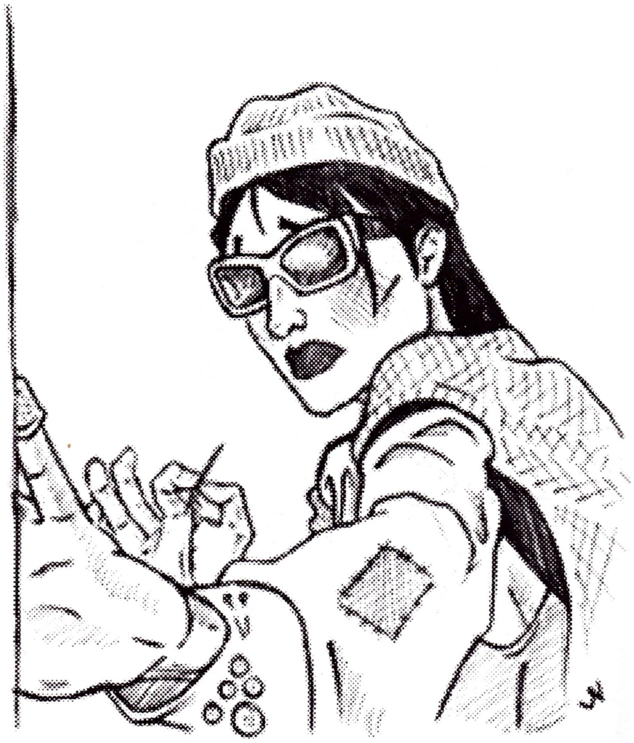
“Hey, man, just the guy I wanted to see! Check it out — a whole new shipment, all the best stuff. And look here — it’s your knife! Sorry, man, just kidding — here you go. What, that? Yeah, I lifted it off some Scribe — said it’s called a pocket watch. I dunno, it looked neat. Hey, did you hear the one about the two Orderlies and the Nurse? The one says . . . “

Occupation: Fixer
Disorder: Kleptomaniac
Aberrations: Pyromaniac. Compulsive
Attitude: Prankster
Vitals: Lucidity: 1
Fluidity: 5
Aura: 3
Zeal: 1
Movement: 2/1/-
Resistance: 15/3/5/2/4
Details: Clueless, Silent Footfall
Status: Rich
Equipment: matches, old Zippo lighter, pistol, pocket watch, toy ray gun, joy buzzer, ball-point pen (out of ink), fuses (dry paper, twisted into a makeshift wick), straitjacket with various pins and brooches and patches and buttons (many obscene) and earrings clipped on, pants, shoes, baseball cap (Nike), various drugs, red clown nose

Life is just a big joke, so you might as well enjoy it while you can. That’s why you tell jokes all the time, and also why you deal in drugs — if you’re going to make it through the day, it helps to have a buzz or two. Fireworks help, too — nice big bright flames to cheer you up and make you smile. And then there’re those little trinkets you pick up here and there, from your clients and from passer-by — hey, it’s just a way to pass the time, right? Got to keep things fun, or there’s no point in anything.

The Webspinner

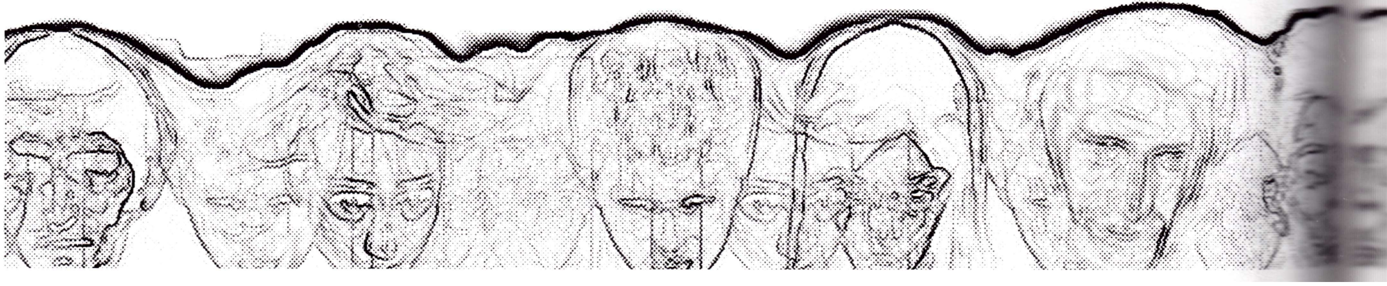
"What do you want? Oh. No, the jacket isn't ready yet — one of the hems was uneven, so I had to redo it. What? No, you can't see it — if I open the door the Orderlies can get in, and you're probably working with them so I don't dare let you come in. I'll pass it to you through the grating and you can try it on — that'll have to do."



Occupation: Weaver
Disorder: Paranoid
Aberration: Anal-Retentive
Attitude: Recluse
Vitals: Lucidity: 2
Fluidity: 3
Aura: 1
Zeal: 2
Movement: 4/2/-
Resistance: 30/6/10/4/8
Details: Ambidextrous, Iron Digestion
Status: Hunted (at least, you think so)

Equipment: needles, thread, yarn, cloth (from various old garments, in various colors and sizes), small loom, old manual sewing machine, knife, sunglasses, long silk gown, shawl, gloves, leather boots

You hate people — you always have. They stare at you, whisper about you, plot against you — it drives you insane, and you get sick with worry. So you hide away as much as you can. It's a chore just to get to the train for food each day, and whenever possible you have friends and clients bring you yours. Ah, clients. The only thing you truly enjoy is working with needle and thread — it's so clean, so simple, so safe, so . . . orderly. Everything exactly in place, and right where you want it, with no tricks and no secrets. If only life could be that way, too.



Escalation

At the end of every session, players are awarded a handful of points that can be used to boost their characters' Vitals, Skills, etc. — at the end of an episode, additional points are received. In this way, a character is forever escalating, rising higher and higher in experience and ability.

However, there are other ways to take the word "escalation" — war, for example, is usually a case of escalating violence. Characters in Asylum are insane, and insanity is highly contagious. Because of this, not only is it virtually impossible to stay sane in an insane world, but it is also inconceivable to prevent yourself from growing worse with the passage of time. Each character's insanity grows as the game goes on.

For distributing points, use the following scale as a basic guide:

Showing up for the session	1 point
Playing the part	1 point
Having a large effect on the plot	1 point
Exceptional roleplaying	1 point
Finishing an episode	1 point
Accomplishing your goal for the episode (if any)	1 point

Points may be applied in the following manner:

Raising a Vital	Current value x4
Raising a Skill	Current value x3
Gaining a new Skill	6 (and there must be someone to teach you)
Gaining an Occupation	15 — note that you must first have all of the Skills involved
Buying a new Quirk	5 (and there must be a reason)

In terms of the escalating insanity within, at the end of each episode the character Draws for a new Aberration. If it is one the character already possesses, it moves to a higher level (see Aberrations, page 69). If the Aberration in question is already at the Extreme level, it instead becomes a Disorder. This is where choosing an Occupation comes in — whenever you add a new Occupation you still need to Draw, but you do not take any change unless you drew "black, black" (two Aberrations), in which case you Draw for and take a single Aberration.

It is because of this continuing mental decline that Inmates in Asylum, despite the fact that they often live to fifty or even sixty, are usually gibbering

wrecks by the time they reach forty, and simply sit in the Lounge in front of the television and drool on themselves.

Sample Session: Down and Dirty

The Characters: Jim is playing John Smith, a homicidal Psychotic who believes he's actually an Orderly. Marty is Don Macaroni, a Sociopathic Fixer (part of the 'Shroom Syndicate). Alex is Sir Donald Quix, the Electric Knight (see Sample Character Creation, page **99**) and Ben is his Paranoid squire, Richard. Charlie is Drake, a Sociopathic Almanac. Jen is Lady Ellegance Swallowtail, a Psychotic Weaver who thinks she's a butterfly and, because of it, does not speak — she's also Don Macaroni's connection for Liquid Blue, and Sir Donald's lady.

GM: It's now close to five o'clock. What is everyone doing?

Jim: Well, I've been tinkering with my new toy [John Smith found a blunderbuss — an early form of firearm whose huge barrel was simply stuffed with whatever small objects were available and might be harmful — last week], but I really need to try it out. [He Draws for his Aberration] Oh, yeah, I'm heading out into the street to look for targets.

Marty: I'm out by my car, looking around.

Jen: I'm in my place, weaving that scarf that Jewel wanted.

Charlie: I'm up in my apartment, taking a nap.

Alex: I've just finished speaking with the Alchemists, so I guess I'm on my way home now.

Ben: I'm with him.

GM: Okay. John Smith steps out into the street and sees Don Macaroni, leaning on the Cadillac where he lives.

Marty: *Ah, there you are. I was starting to wonder about you.*

Jim: [Leaning in close to Marty and scowling] *Are you saying you don't trust me?*

Marty: *No, but if you're going to work for me you have to be around when I need you.*

Jim: *All right, so I'm around. What do you want?*

Marty: *I need to make some pick-ups and I want you to come along for protection.*

Jim: *Okay, but first I need to test this thing out.* [He eyes Marty speculatively, and Marty backs away]

GM: Alex, you're back on your block now, and you see two people up ahead of you. Draw your Lucidity at Easy.

Alex draws a "blue, green" — 7 — adds his Lucidity of 3, and gets a 10.

Alex: Okay, I made it without any problem.

GM: You think the smaller one is Don Macaroni — but the bigger one is definitely John Smith.

Alex: Good, I wanted to talk to him, anyway. *John Smith! I would have words with you!*

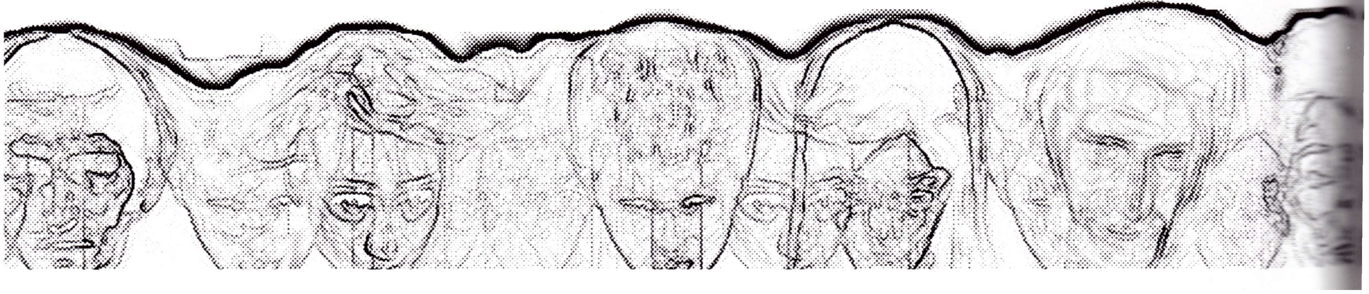
GM: Jim, you hear this.

Jim: I turn and fire. [shrugging at Alex] Sorry, man.

GM: Go ahead and Draw Initiative. Ben, you too.

Marty: Do I need to Draw?

GM: Well, what are you doing?



Marty: Ducking back behind John Smith.

GM: No, you're not in combat then, so you don't have to.

Jim draws "white, blue" (8), Alex gets a "blue, red" (6), and Ben has the ill fortune to pull "black, black." Even with the Speed Modifier of -2 for the gun, Jim goes first.

GM: Okay, what's everybody doing?

Jim: I'm spinning and firing.

Alex: I'm diving out of the way.

Ben: I freeze.

GM: Jim, Draw to hit. Difficulty, given the range, is Hard, which is 10.

Jim Draws a "white, red" (7) and adds his 3 in Firearms.

Jim: I hit.

GM: Okay — Alex, Draw to dodge.

Alex Draws "white, green" (8) and adds his Fluidity (4).

Alex: Twelve, total.

GM: That beats Jim's ten — Sir Donald manages to roll beneath the blast. Jim, how many bullets did you use to prime that thing?

Jim: Two. It can take six.

GM: And what did you load it with?

Jim: Just dirt and rocks.

GM: Okay — Ben, you take one wound to your torso, as you get pelted with small pebbles and dirt. Jen and Charlie, Draw your Lucidity at Easy.

Jen draws a "white, green" (8) and Charlie maxxes out with a "white, white."

GM: Okay, you both hear a gun go off right outside — Charlie, it's a weird sound, not like any gun you've heard before.

Charlie: I grab my pistol, make sure it's empty, and then head downstairs.

Marty: It's empty?

Charlie: [shrugging] Nobody else knows that.

Jen: I head out my front door.

GM: Okay, Jen, you get outside first, and you see Sir Donald and Squire Richard, as well as Don Macaroni and that big guy, John Smith. Smith is holding a huge gun, still pointed at Sir Donald and Squire Richard, Richard is covered in dirt, and Sir Donald is doing [glancing at Alex] what?

Alex: I'm drawing my sword and advancing towards John Smith — I thought he could be an ally, but obviously I was wrong.

Jen: I pull out my seam-ripper.

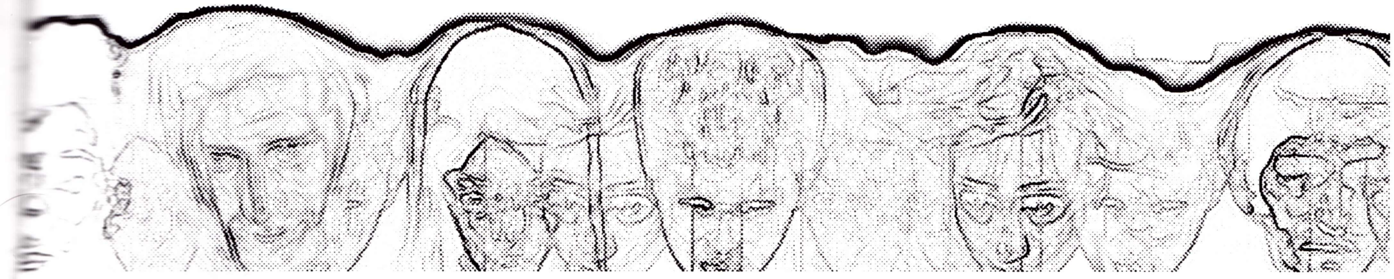
GM: Right. Charlie, you make it downstairs and see the same scene. You recognize the gun John Smith's waving as the one you saw at the Mall yesterday. The rest of you see Drake emerge from a nearby apartment building, and Lady Ellegance step out of an old movie theater next door. Initiative, everyone.

Jim Draws a "white, green" (8), which leaves him with a 6 (-2 for the gun again) and goes first. Charlie, with a "blue, green" (7) and a gun, goes second. Then comes Alex, with a "blue, blue" (6) and a sword (-4, so his Initiative is 4) and Lady Ellegance with a "red, black" (3) — her seam-ripper is considered a knife (-1), so she goes on 2. Marty and Ben decide not to enter combat, the one still hiding and the other still frozen with fear.

GM: Okay, declare.

Jim: Who's near me?

GM: At this point, Don Macaroni,



Drake, and Lady Ellegance are closest — Drake has a gun, and Sir Donald, heading towards you, has his sword out. Lady Ellegance isn't holding anything, as far as you can tell.

Jim: I shoot Drake.

Drake: I shoot him back.

Alex: I attack John Smith.

Jen: I use my seam-ripper on John Smith, where it'll do the most good.

GM: Jim, go ahead and Draw Lucidity for me, at Hard.

Jim draws a "red, black" (3) and adds his Lucidity of 2 — no sale.

Jim: Nope.

GM: Okay, you level your gun at Drake, pull the trigger, and — click — nothing happens. You're pointing the blunderbuss, which is empty.

Jim: Oh, hell!

GM: Drake, you take aim at John Smith — you're practically in each other's faces by now — pull the trigger, and . . . click.

Charlie: That's right, my gun was already empty.

GM: Alex, Draw to hit. Difficulty, since John Smith isn't even paying attention to you, is Easy.

Alex Draws a "blue, red" (6) and adds his Melee of 3 — not a problem.

Alex: That's what I love about swords — they don't need ammo. I hit.

GM: Draw for location.

Alex gets a "blue, green," which is shoulder wound.

Alex: That's my Zeal plus 4 — so 8 — to the shoulder.

Jim: Ow! At least my Torso has 25, so I'm not in danger of passing out.

GM: Okay, Jen, your turn.

Jen Draws a "white, white" (10).

Jen: Can I add my Sewing instead of Melee?

GM: Are you aiming for him or his clothes?

Jen: His clothes — specifically, his pants.

GM: Sure, then.

Jen: In that case, I have a 13!

GM: Wow! Jim, you suddenly feel a draft below the waist, as your pants fall to your ankles. And there's a woman present.

Jim: Eep! I drop my gun and grab for my pants.

Alex: If he drops his gun, I sheathe my sword and bow to Lady Ellegance. *My Lady, your courage is as exemplary as your beauty.*

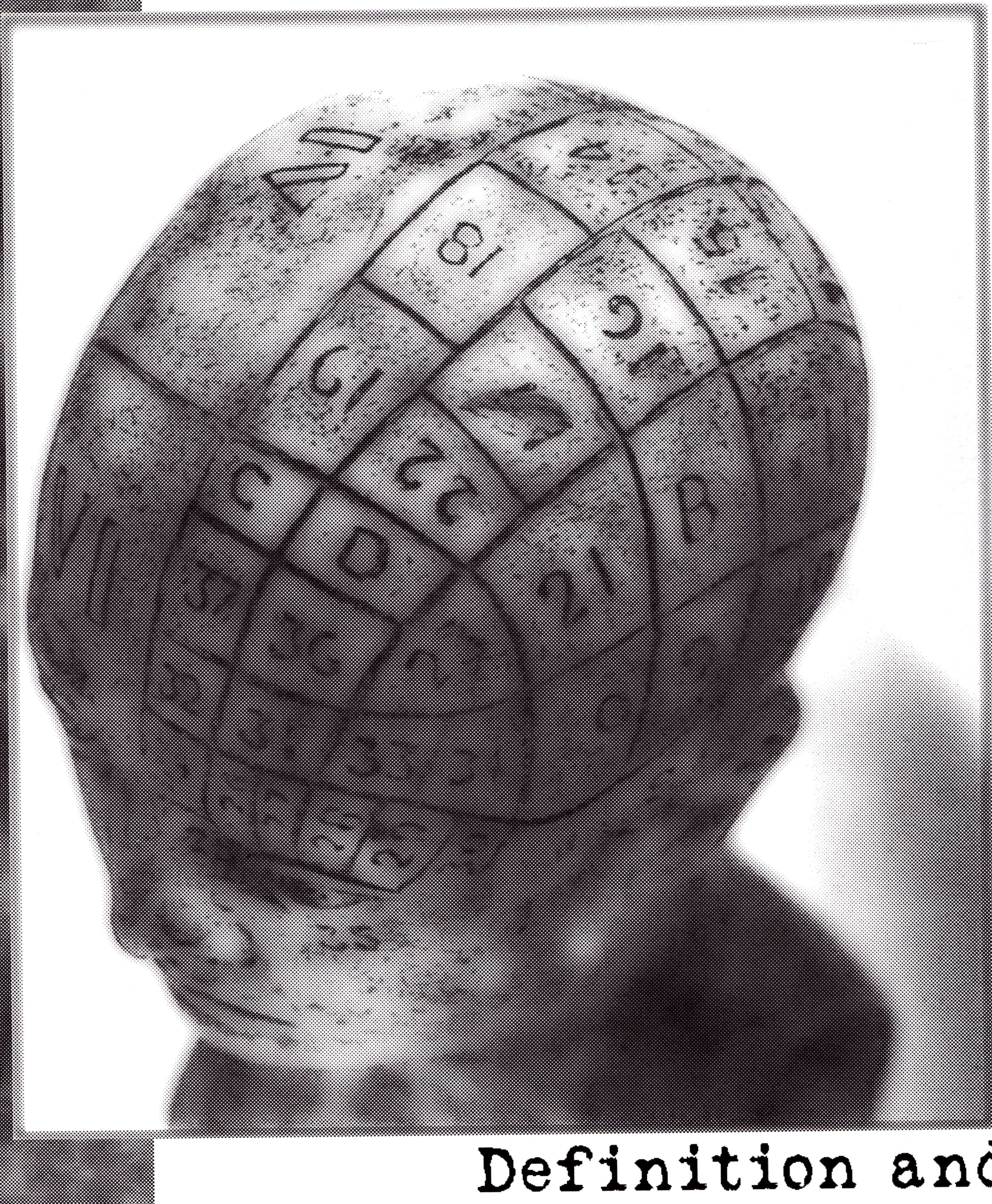
Jen: *Izz-glmph!* [Turning towards Jim] *Yazza-rumph-hm!*

Charlie: Well, I guess if everyone else's put their weapons down I back off, too.

GM: Okay, that's it for combat, then.

Section 4

On Insanity



Definition and History

"Bargain Basement" -- Part Four

"Sh! Orderlies! And they're packing!"

"Left or right?"

Jason took a second look, gulped, and whispered back, "Right."

"Shit!" Caustic said nothing as Mary swore, but the look on his face was more than enough to convey his most common expression: "It figures."

"They must have heard the rumors too, and headed out here to claim whatever's there for themselves." The Orderlies were renowned for their greed, and they had the strength to take what they wanted without having to worry too much.

"Well, at this point that's nothing," Caustic pointed out. "We haven't even reached the damned place yet! But that won't stop them from shooting us to get us out of the way."

"So what the hell do we do now?" Jason asked, then froze as he realized that Mary had both pistols out. "Mary, what are you doing? It's a squad, for Christ's sake! You can't take them!"

"I know that," she snapped back, glaring at him. "They help me think. Now shut up." She started pacing inside the narrow alley, weapons clutched at her side, face knit in an unusual display of concentration. Caustic watched her pacing back and forth, and finally she fixed him with a glare as well.

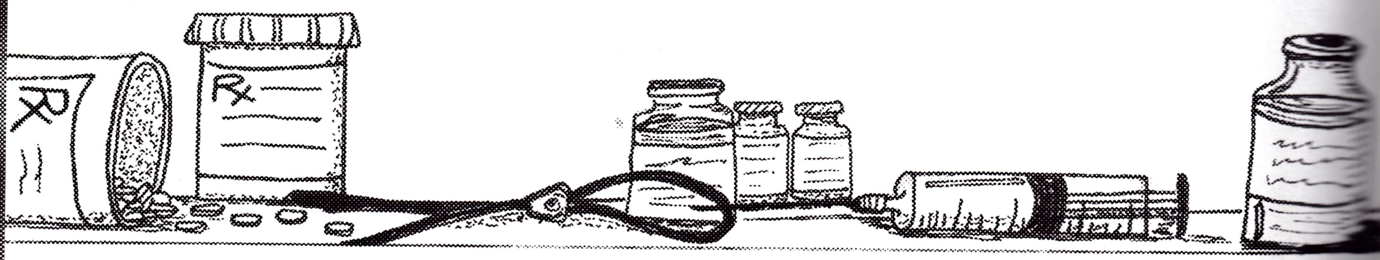
"What? You have any bright ideas?"

"Who, me?" He managed to look innocent, which was quite a challenge for someone whose usual expression was one of bored surliness — then the look changed to a more typical sneer. "You know I'm not smart enough to think of anything worthwhile."

"Funny," Mary muttered in reply, but Jason wasn't amused — he whirled around and, abandoning his lookout, grabbed Caustic by the front of his jacket.

"We're about to be attacked by an entire Squad — right-handed, no less! — there are just the three of us, and they probably have descriptions on us already, so don't give me that crap!" He shook Caustic as roughly as he could — the other man outweighed him by a good thirty pounds, so this wasn't all that effective — and leaned in close to him, face to face. "If they catch us here, we're as good as dead, so think of something, damn it!"

"Well," Caustic pulled free of Jason's grip with exaggerated care, "I don't know." He brushed imaginary dust from his shirt and sneered. "If you want to quit now and try to scurry back home, be my guest. We could always go shopping." His head snapped up as the last word left his mouth, and a look of horror crossed his eyes for just an instant — then a slow smile spread across his face, and his entire posture relaxed as, reaching into his jacket, he withdrew a long powdered wig and settled in



carefully on his head.

"Oh, this is all we need," Jason muttered, sinking back down to the ground. "And here I thought Caustic was useless."

"Caustic is useless," the wig-topped man informed him primly, calmly brushing off his sleeves, "but I'm here now, and everything's going to be fine."

"Oh, really?" Mary looked up from her thoughts again. "And what do you have to offer for this little situation, Marc?"

Marc arched an eyebrow. "Well, if you'd all listened to me, you never would have been here in the first place, and my clothes wouldn't be in such a mess." He frowned down at himself. "I keep telling that fool to wash them, but he never listens."

"We have bigger problems right now than your cleanliness," Mary reminded him. "Those Orderlies are almost here, and they'll shoot first and not even bother to ask questions later."

"Not necessarily," Marc corrected, and withdrew a small drum and a carved drumstick from his backpack. "Put those away somewhere," he instructed, gesturing at Mary's pistols, "stand up," directed at the cowering Jason, "and come with me."

"What are you going to do?" Jason was pale, and his hands were starting to shake, but he did stand up, and Marc favored him with a confident smile.

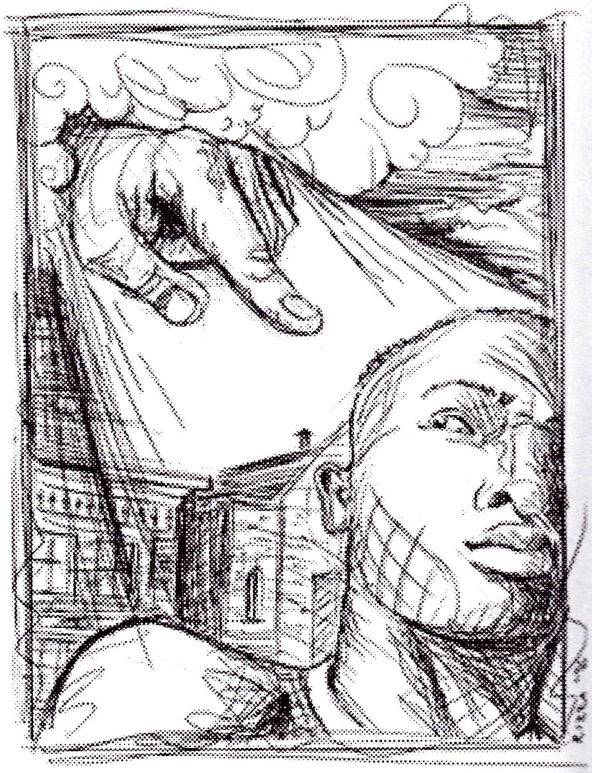
"I'm going to sing," he replied, and, beating the drum in a complicated, festive tune, stepped out around the corner.

What Is Insanity?

One day in 1986, while walking along Park Avenue in New York City, CBS network anchor Dan Rather was approached by a complete stranger who demanded to know, "Kenneth, what's the frequency?" When Rather ignored the question and turned away, the man attacked him, knocking him to the ground and beating him up. The man ran off before he could be captured.

Only years later did authorities learn who the man was. William Tager, being held in the shooting death of an NBC network technician in 1994, admitted during his interrogation that he had been Rather's mysterious attacker eight years earlier. Tager was "convinced that the media had him under surveillance and were beaming hostile messages at him constantly." ("Dan Rather") His efforts to free himself of this imagined surveillance had spurred him to attack both Rather and the NBC technician.

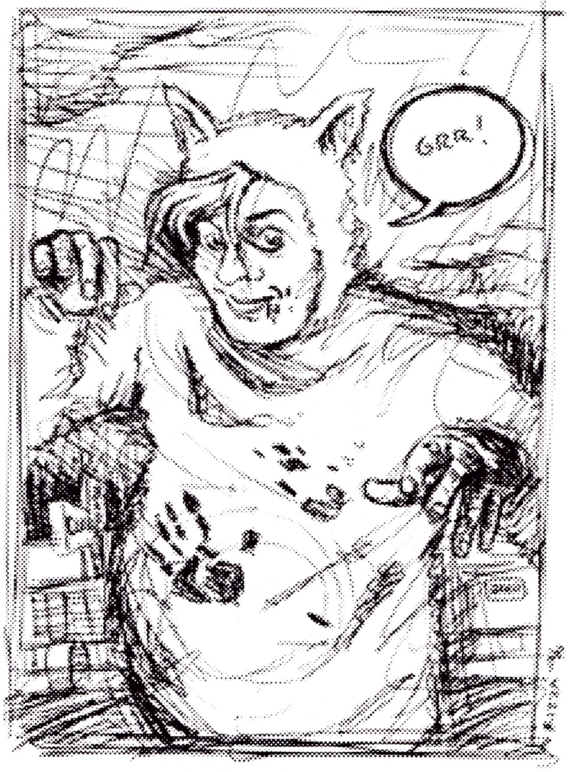
Anyone reading this account will quite confidently assert that Tager was insane. A man who believes that the combined efforts of the three major commercial television networks are being directed towards his surveillance and brainwashing could easily be said to have lost his sense of reality and perspective. However, consider this: if the three major television networks actually were keeping track of and beaming hostile messages to this one man, Tager did the only rational thing he could. He approached Rather because, as a major representative of one of the three networks, Rather would of course be one of the main players in the conspiracy that Tager believed himself to be a victim of. When he asked to know "the frequency," he was asking Rather to tell him what electronic frequency the networks were broadcasting on to beam the signals into his brain, so that he could possibly find some way to jam the signals. And of course Tager wouldn't have needed to be more specific with his question, because he could quite reasonably expect Rather to have intimate knowledge of him and the brain-washing campaign that the networks were subjecting him to. More than this, since it would be unlikely that a member of such a conspiracy would



incriminate himself voluntarily, it was reasonable for Tager to expect that some threat of violence would be necessary to extract the information.

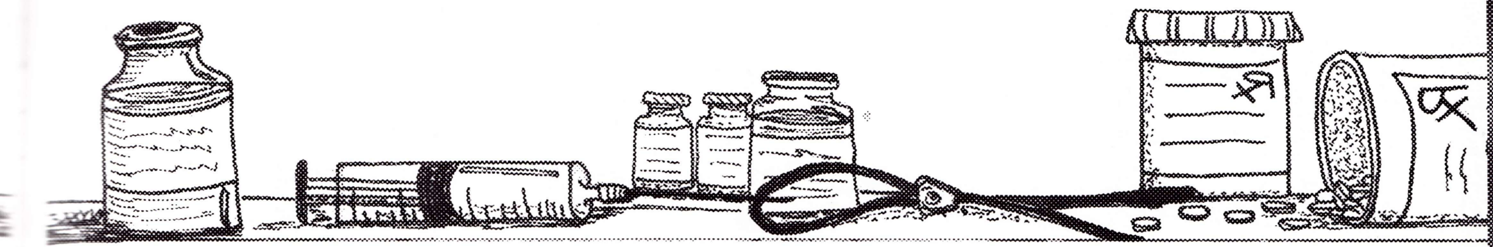
In other words, if we accept that Tager was aware of all of the truths that we refer to as "reality," but that he also included one additional "truth" of his own — that the combined efforts of the three major commercial television networks were constantly directed towards his surveillance and brainwashing — every action he took from that point on was reasonable and quite logical. Certainly it was an act of desperation to attack a network anchorman on a busy city street or to shoot a defenseless and unsuspecting technician. But if you are a lone man protecting yourself against three corporate giants, desperate actions are your only logical recourse.

As British psychiatrist Dr. Alexander R. K. Mitchell noted: "[The schizophrenic] is rarely hallucinated and may appear quite normal until someone touches upon a sensitive subject which releases all of his paranoia" (Drury 72). In other words, one could easily say that, with many delusions and psychoses, the person is insane in just one way. When you discuss any other subject with such a person, he or she will be as cogent — and often even more intelligent and well-versed — as a so-called "sane" person. But if you cross over into subjects which contradict the person's delusion, you will receive quite an explosive response. But think of it from the madman's point of view: if you were the only person who knew that space aliens were controlling the fluctuations in the New York Stock Exchange, you would naturally be quite defensive on the subject.



It cannot be said, then, that people with delusions have lost their reason since, allowing for their firm belief in their delusion, they act quite rationally. This, however, makes it all the more difficult to define whether someone is insane, and, further, whether that insanity poses any sort of risk to the community.

Consider, for example, the case of Joshua Norton, an Englishman who lived in San Francisco in the mid to late nineteenth century. One afternoon in September 1859, a man described as "well-dressed and serious-looking" (Drury 58) entered the offices of the Bulletin, a local newspaper, and handed



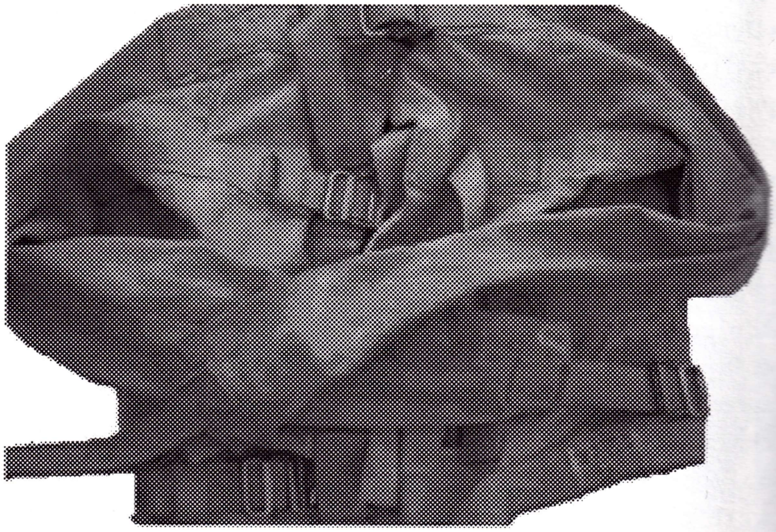
editor George Fitch a piece of paper which read as follows:

> At the peremptory request of a large majority of the citizens of these United States, I, Joshua Norton, formerly of Algoa Bay, Cape of Good Hope, and now for the past nine years and ten months of San Francisco, California, declare and proclaim myself Emperor of these U. S., and in virtue of the authority thereby in me vested, do hereby order and direct the representatives of the different States of the Union to assemble in the Musical Hall of this city on the 1st day of February next, then and there to make such alterations in the existing laws of the Union as may ameliorate the evils under which the country is laboring, and thereby cause confidence to exist, both at home and abroad, in our stability and integrity.
>
> NORTON I,
> Emperor of the
> United States

Fitch believed the man to be completely insane, but he was so delighted by the Imperial Proclamation that he printed it in that evening's edition of the Bulletin, taking space away from reports of the tragic death of one of California's United States senators a few days before.

Over the years, Norton I kept coming to Fitch with these proclamations, and Fitch continued to print them, and the Emperor gained an odd sort of fame or notoriety, so that soon people all over the country were familiar with his story. San Francisco was still a young town in those days, and Emperor Norton became as much a symbol of the city in his day as the Golden Gate Bridge is a symbol of the city today. Norton could always be found eating from the free buffet offered at the Martin & Horton's Tavern, and many famous people came to visit him there. The first tourist guide written about the city, published in 1876, even recommended that tourists come to see the Emperor hold court, noting:

> He will talk very readily



> upon any subject, and his opinions are usually very correct, except when relating to himself. He is more familiar with history than the ordinary citizen, and his scientific knowledge, though sometimes mixed, is considerable. (Drury 72)

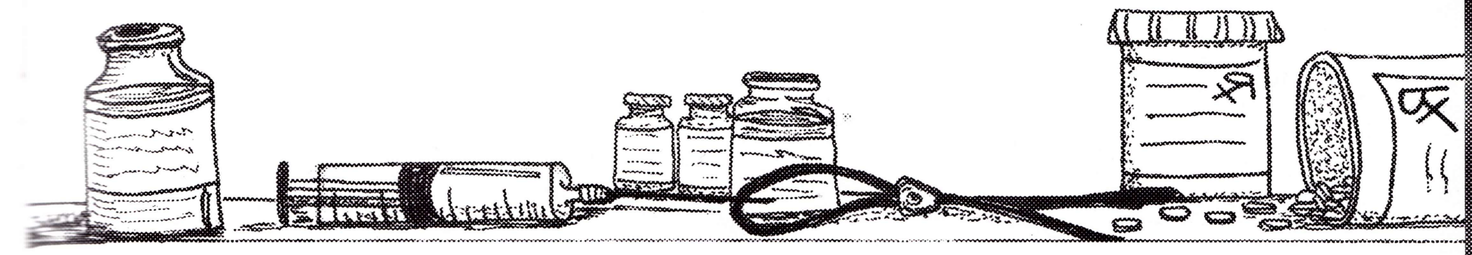
"Anyone who called him 'Mr. Norton' was gently reminded of his imperial rank and admonished to address him with proper respect. The banker and the broker who joined him for lunch soon learned to call him 'Your Majesty'" (Drury 72). When Norton died in 1880, ten thousand people came to his funeral, and many great American literary and political figures noted his passing.

It is easy to say that, while Norton was as delusional as Dan Rather's attacker William Tager, the latter's delusion expressed itself in violence, while Emperor Norton was a benign, even pitiable, character. But it gives one pause to note that, just two years into the Emperor's "reign," an Austrian man named George Koenig "was committed to the State Insane Asylum in Stockton [California] for stoutly maintaining that he was the rightful King of Austria" (Drury 70). What logic, what reason, was it that consigned Koenig to a slow death in a state asylum, while Norton lived a happy life of freedom and national celebrity?

These examples illustrate why it is so difficult to define insanity in any concrete way. The word itself means "a belief in things outside accepted reality," but this means that what we label as insane is determined by how we define "reality." For example, two thousand years ago, anyone who insisted that the Earth was in constant motion would have been looked upon as a lunatic because this view — although it turned out to be the truth — was contrary to the accepted view of reality at the time. At the same time, anyone who, in this century, claims to hear disembodied voices or to carry on active conversations with dead ancestors would be looked upon as insane. Two thousand years ago, however, these were considered to be quite normal, everyday elements of "reality."

> In The Origins of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind (1976), Julian Jaynes asserts that insanity, by which he means schizophrenia, did not exist at the stage of the bi-cameral mind of mental evolution before 1000 B.C.. According to Jaynes, most people were controlled by auditory hallucinations. By the norm of modern standards, this would be considered schizophrenic. (Weckowicz 10)

In the long run, then, insanity is so hard to define because our definition of reality is so fluid. There are, however, even more subtle problems with definition. It is easy to label someone as insane if his or her actions are harmful or



destructive. But what do we say about a man who suddenly gives his life savings to charity and lives out the rest of his life in abject poverty? What do we say about the man who, in the face of all reason, runs back into a burning building to save his pet cat? Is the act of fighting in the battlefield against impossible odds patriotic or suicidal? Just as one man's hero is another man's villain, one man's act of bravery or generosity is another man's act of lunacy.

This becomes even more difficult when we debate the sanity of world leaders. Adolf Hitler, for example, is easily identifiable as a homicidal madman — by those who fought against him in World War II. To many of his own people at the time, Hitler was a daring and decisive man who was leading the Aryan people on the greatest crusade humanity had ever undertaken. Joan of Arc, who heard voices telling her to lead the French armies into victory, became one of the greatest generals of medieval Europe, but that didn't stop her own people from declaring her a witch and burning her at the stake. This condemnation, in turn, did not stop the Catholic church from canonizing her five hundred years later. Was she insane or not? Was she a great leader or not? It is impossible to answer either question with any certainty. Was Napoleon insane? Was Nero? And even if these men were not insane to begin with, did their supreme power and the pressures of leadership drive them insane? These questions — unanswerable as they are — become all the more troubling when we consider the consequences of failing to answer them: for example, King George III of England was declared insane in 1811, but was allowed to continue ruling England (albeit with his son serving as regent) until his death in 1820.

Along the same lines, artistic creativity has often been seen as a form of madness. The ancient Greeks believed that the Muses drove artists temporarily insane as part of the act of inspiration. Many have noted the link between creativity and madness — that there is a higher incidence of mental illness among highly creative people, and that insane people can be capable of producing great art:

> Johns Hopkins University psychologist Kay Redfield Jamison, whose many books and articles on the subject have made her the de facto point person for the art-and-madness link, has compiled a roll call of the artists in this unhappy club that reads like the A-list for the cocktail party of the millennium. Among them are

> poets William Blake, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, Emily Dickinson, and Anne Sexton; novelists Emile Zola, Mary Shelley, Leo Tolstoy, Maxim Gorky, and Robert Louis Stevenson; playwright Eugene O'Neill; visual artists Michelangelo, Théodore Géricault, Edvard Munch, Paul Gaugin, Vincent van Gogh, Mark Rothko, and Georgia O'Keeffe; and musicians from Handel to Charlie Parker. (Gutin 77)

If we accept that all of these artists — some of the greatest and most influential in Western culture — were touched by madness, how does that change our evaluation of their work? An even more puzzling question is: if you "cure" a mad artist, will that artist still be capable of producing great art? And, no matter how you answer that question, a further, even more troubling question is: should we try to treat these people, or merely allow them to go mad and produce art as they may?

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All of these elements work to further cloud any possible understanding of what insanity is and how to identify and define it.

The History of Insanity

Because insanity is defined in contrast to prevailing views of reality, human society has invariably explained insanity, and designed cures for insanity, in terms of the cultural metaphors each society clings to.

Ancient, prehistoric people, for example, believed in a world of spirits — that the dead lived on in disembodied forms, aiding and guiding — and sometimes punishing — the living. To these primitive people, madness (as well as all other forms of sickness) was caused by an evil spirit possessing the afflicted person. In some cultures, the evil spirit was said to have removed part of the afflicted person's soul:

> Possession of a spirit may be overt or latent. In the latter case, an individual may suffer from a mental or physical illness without

> realizing that it is caused by an indwelling spirit. Exorcising that spirit by incantations and by pitting the will of the exorcist against that of the spirit, may bring about a cure. (Weckowicz 3)

According to anthropologists, this belief "originated in Western Asia and became part of the folklore of the peoples who came from that part of the world" (Weckowicz 2).

The ancient Greeks also accepted this view of insanity, although they drew a distinction between harmful and beneficial possession. Harmful possession, seen as "emanating from the emotional center of man in the heart," was called thymos, while beneficial possession, in which "a benign deity . . . takes possession" of a person, was called psyche. Psyche included "the Delphic priestess who is possessed by the earth-mother [or the] bard . . . possessed by a muse" (Weckowicz 3). Plato, in Phaedrus, further delineates psyche into four distinct types: prophetic, telestic or ritual, poetic, and erotic. The first three were to be seen as blessings from the gods, but the fourth, Plato warns, "could lead to a destructive madness" (Weckowicz 14).

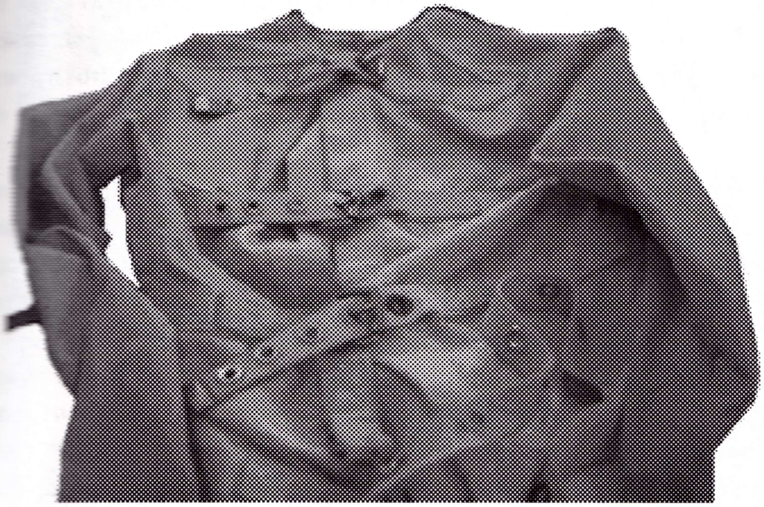
This idea of beneficial, holy possession and madness reached its peak in Greek society with the founding of the Cult of Dionysios in the fifth century B.C. Members of this and other similar cults worshipped through excessive drinking and/or dancing, which would work the group into a state of communal madness:

> Dionysios [was depicted as] accompanied by Maenads, or "crazy women." In some parts of Greece, female worshipers identified with the Maenads and worked themselves into a frenzy, even to the extent of attacking animals, eating raw meat, drinking blood, and resorting to cannibalism. The Bacchic rituals were associated with heavy drinking and sex orgies as well. These provided an expression to socially forbidden urges and desires. (Weckowicz 15)

The belief in possession influenced other cultures as well. The early Hebrews believed in possession even after they adopted their monotheistic religion. Through Judaism, this belief influenced early Christian thought, and Jesus is shown many times in the New Testament "driving out demons." A good example appears in the Gospel of Luke:

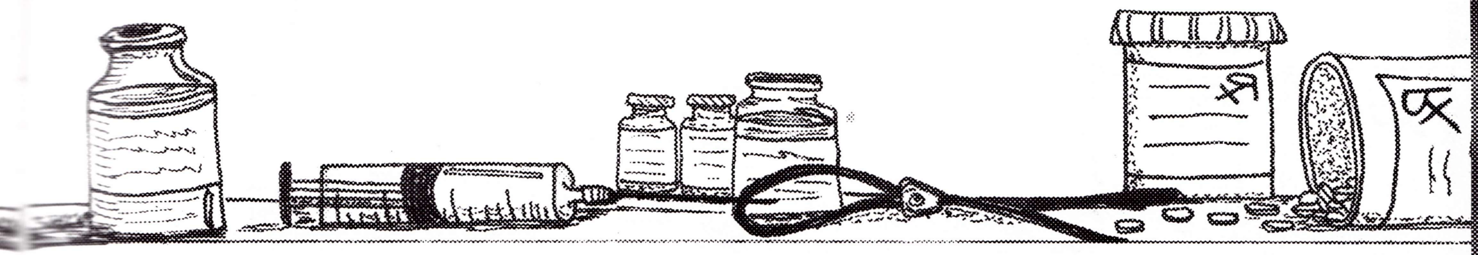
> And when [Jesus] went forth to land, there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time and wore no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with

> thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not." (For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For oftentimes it had caught him; and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.) And Jesus asked him, saying "What is thy name?" And he said "Legion," because many devils were entered into him. . . . And [Jesus] suffered them. Then the devils went out of the man . . . . Then [the townspeople] went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind . . . . (Luke 8:27-35)



As Christianity gained a more universal following and more strongly codified its cosmology, however, madness came to be seen in terms of a different metaphor — that of sin and corruption. Medieval Christians believed that the Earth was an active battleground in the fight between God and Satan, and that humans were merely pawns in this game. Those who had been baptized and had dedicated their lives to Christ, however, were safe from demonic influence. This being the case, if a man were afflicted with madness — that is, possessed by demons — it was seen as a sign that he was not one of the saved. A true child of Christ could not be possessed by evil. Based on this belief, many insane people in the Middle Ages were burned at the stake as witches, or "cured" by "exorcisms" of severe torture.

But insanity in ancient times was defined in terms of other metaphors as well. The ancient Greek philosophers — and, through them, the ancient Romans — came to think of themselves and the world around them in orderly terms. They worked from the belief that the universe was by and of its nature a balanced and orderly place, and that all of the misery in the world was caused by imbalance. Insanity, therefore, was caused by an imbalance in the body, or an attack on the body. These thinkers were the first to see insanity as



a medical rather than spiritual condition.

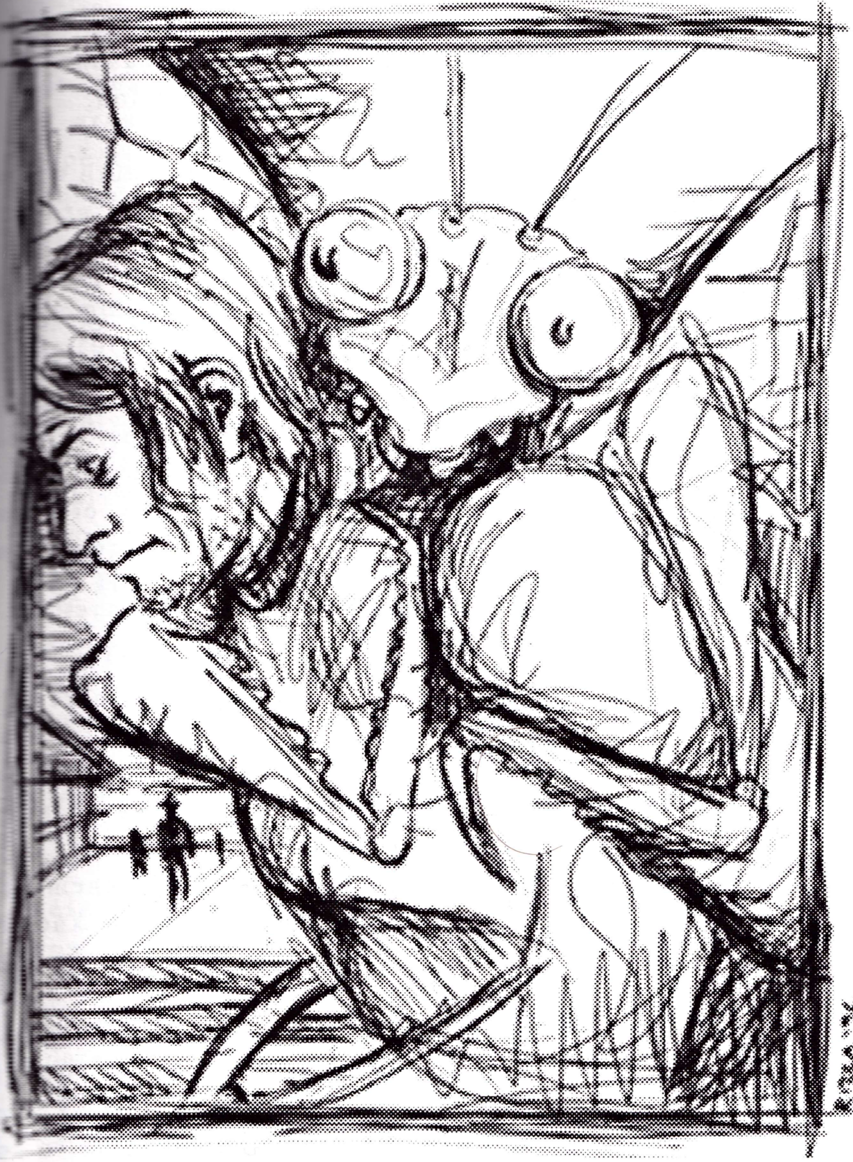
The Coan School, for example, founded by Hippocrates of Cos (for whom the Hippocratic Oath is named), taught that the entire universe was made up of four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. Humans contained these four elements in balanced amounts in the different fluids, or "humors," of the body: phlegm (water), blood (air), yellow bile (fire), and black bile (earth). Diseases occurred when these humors became unbalanced:

> The Hippocratic doctor treated the whole organism and not one disease, or a diseased organ . . . . The members of the Coan school believed that mental disorders were caused by superfluous black or yellow bile rising to the brain and affecting the [vital spirit of the individual], causing melancholia in the case of black bile, and frenzy or mania in the case of yellow bile. (Weckowicz 21-2)

The Cnidian school, on the other hand, saw diseases as external agents that attacked the healthy body, much as we do today. The Cnidians, however, believed that insanity was also caused by external agents, and so their cures tended to revolve around flushing the offending infection out of the afflicted body.

The study of insanity continued much in this way, with different ideas gaining currency at different points in history, for a millennia and a half. In the nineteenth century, however, at the end of the so-called "Age of Reason," many doctors in Europe were looking for a more scientific, more quantifiable theory of what causes insanity. These theories ran from the ridiculous to the sublime. For example, Wilhelm Fliess of Vienna, Austria, put forward a theory at the end of the nineteenth century that a person's personality was determined by the size and contours of his or her nasal passages and sinuses. Insanity, Fliess proposed, was caused by irregularities in these facial structures, and he treated many patients in his lifetime, both surgically and with liberal prescriptions of cocaine.

Fliess's friend, a young neurologist named Sigmund Freud, had other ideas on the nature of sanity and insanity (although this did not stop him from subjecting himself to many of Fliess's treatments and prescriptions). Freud, who preferred to treat his patients by talking with them at length about their lives and their dreams, determined that he could trace many mental disorders to trauma early in the afflicted person's life. This caused him to propose a completely new way of viewing sanity and insanity. Freud posited that people were not born sane or insane, but rather that the human psyche developed during the first five years of life, naturally progressing through several stages of growth. Insanity was caused when some event in the child's life disturbed this natural process, although the results of that disturbance might not manifest themselves until much later in life.



This was Freud's greatest contribution to modern views on insanity. No one had ever viewed sanity as a developmental process before. And if insanity was caused by an error in that process, then naturally the cure would be process-oriented as well. No matter how often or how vehemently people have questioned other details of Freud's theories — the sexual awareness of children, the primacy of sexual symbols, the Oedipus and Electra complexes — all psychologists, ever since Freud coined the term, have seen insanity as a by-product of some sort of mishap during the natural development of the subject's psyche, and have sought to treat insanity by gently leading the subject back through this natural process, rebuilding the damaged psyche as they go.

The History of the Asylum

In ancient times, insane people, like all other sick people, were treated (either through exorcism or medical means) in the comfort of their own homes. In the millennium after the fall of Rome, however, as Christianity gained primacy over Europe and insanity came to be increasingly viewed as a weakness or corruption of the soul, insane people were either accused of witchcraft and executed or ignored completely. Those in the latter group were often allowed to roam free in the small country towns, giving rise to the familiar figure of the village idiot, or were

confined to a single room in the family house, giving rise to the equally recognizable archetype of the "madwoman in the attic."

During the Renaissance, however, towns grew into great cities. This led to greater concentrations of insane people but less room for them to ramble in, and so many cities instituted asylums to house them. Insanity was believed at the time to be incurable, and so early asylums were more akin to prisons than to hospitals. Since reason was seen as a defining human quality, those humans who had lost their reason were seen as having been reduced to the state of mere animals, and so they were confined much in the same way that animals were confined — no beds, few clothes, inadequate food, and severe physical punishments and privations. Anyone committed to such an asylum could very well expect to die there, and death came slowly.

The end of the Renaissance and the advent of the "Age of Reason" served only to exasperate the situation:

> By the seventeenth century a new policy had grown up in Europe. Inability or unwillingness to work being judged a crime, all vagrants were rounded up and placed in large institutions in the cities. Included in the catch were mental defectives, petty criminals, prostitutes, beggars, and the insane. (Clark 29)

This period, known as "The Great Confinement," saw a rapid increase in the populations of Europe's asylums with no significant improvement in the conditions there. Every major European city had at least one such institution. The most notorious of these, Bethlehem Royal Hospital in London, came to be known as "Bedlam," and the word has taken on a meaning of its own ever since. Bedlam was a particularly cruel place, but worse yet, the city earned money to cover the operating costs of the hospital by allowing the cream of London society to come view the inmates — of either gender, in various states of frenzy and undress — and charging admission. The British nobles, amused by the "antics" of the inmates, saw a trip to Bedlam as comparable to a trip to the Royal Zoo.

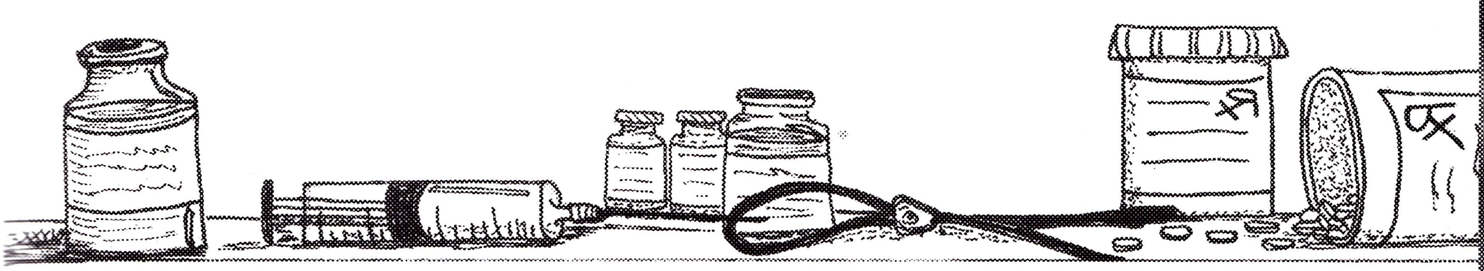
When reform came to the asylum, it came all over Europe and all at once. St. Vincent dePaul and Philippe Pinel of France, Vincenzo Chiarugi of Italy, William Battie and John Conolly of England, and Benjamin Rush and Dorothea L. Dix of the United States were all ground-breaking reformers in their respective countries, each of them instrumental in transforming at least one asylum — and sometimes transforming every asylum in the nation — from a communal human zoo into a home of comfort, safety, and mercy for the afflicted. Many religious groups, most notably the Quakers, opened up asylums of their own, meant not just to confine but also to soothe insane people. Methods of correction — such as whipping, binding, and solitary confinement — were replaced with kind words, moral instruction, warm baths, and simple activities to occupy and mollify disturbed minds. Cold stone floors, straw beds, and poor hygienic conditions were replaced with warmth, adequate clothing, nutritious food, and fresh air.

Even so, and despite the fact that these newer, more humane asylums were seen as places of treatment as much as they were seen as places of confinement, insanity was still for the most part considered to be incurable. Still, the asylums of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries served also as laboratories for the study of madness. Many discoveries, such as the therapeutic qualities of sedatives and of artistic activity, were discovered during this period.

When Freud's theories gained general acceptance in the early twentieth century, asylums changed again. Now that there were codified and increasingly successful methods for treating and even curing insanity, asylums changed into mental hospitals. Confinement to an asylum no longer necessarily meant life imprisonment, but could also mean, after a few months or years of treatment, release from the asylum and a return to normal life.

This period of the universal treatment of insanity, unfortunately, was brief. The Advent of the Blanket Seed, and the Wars that followed, put an end to this and almost every other human endeavor of the period. As insanity became much more common and widespread, the world governments, in a last-ditch effort to maintain some sort of control over the situation, transformed many of their larger cities into asylums themselves. Therefore, whereas once asylums were places where insane people were kept for the protection of so-called "sane" people, now asylums were instituted to protect the insane from the Lunatic Fringe and all other manner of decadence and decay that exists outside the walls of the Ward. There are still Wardens overseeing the operation of these institutions, Orderlies seeing to the day-to-day needs of the Inmates, and Shrinks still investigating and treating manifestations of insanity. Some Shrinks — like Malcolm, who lives three doors down from me — actually spend their time theorizing on the possibility of a universal cure, as if there's any hope of that. Still, he's the Warden's pet, so what are you going to do?

This is my full report, gleaned from a few recovered books and magazines which I have purchased over the years from Almanacs throughout the Ward. It is an excellent report, meticu-



lously written, with every dot and period in exactly its right place. Don't let Malcolm tell you otherwise, and by the way — he's been hoarding rations in his room. I wouldn't go in there, though, if I were you. There's no telling what diseases he's got growing in the piles of papers and dirty laundry in there. Oh, and don't let Franklin touch this treatise, my masterpiece. If he changes one comma, I'm going to put ground glass in his dinner, believe you me.

Would you let me back out of my room now?

Postscript: If anyone has read this entire essay and is still interested enough to decipher this tiny print, you're crazier than I am. Send a postcard to Uncle Lex, care of Clockworks, and let him know all about it.

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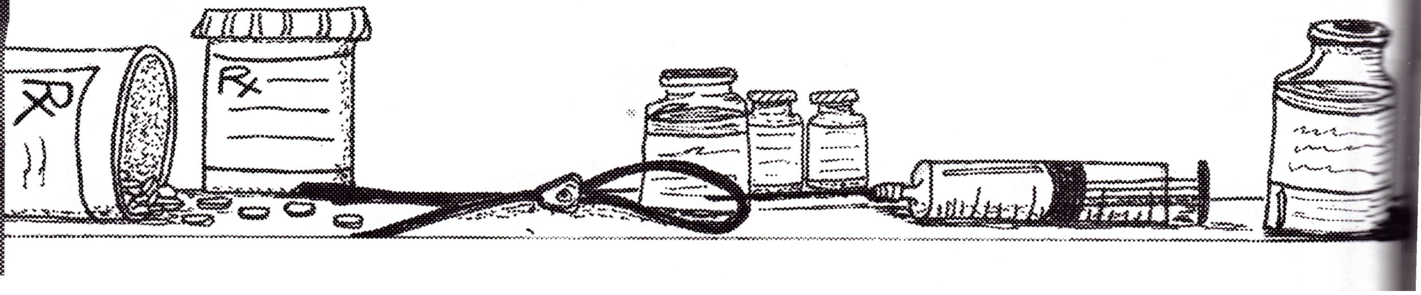
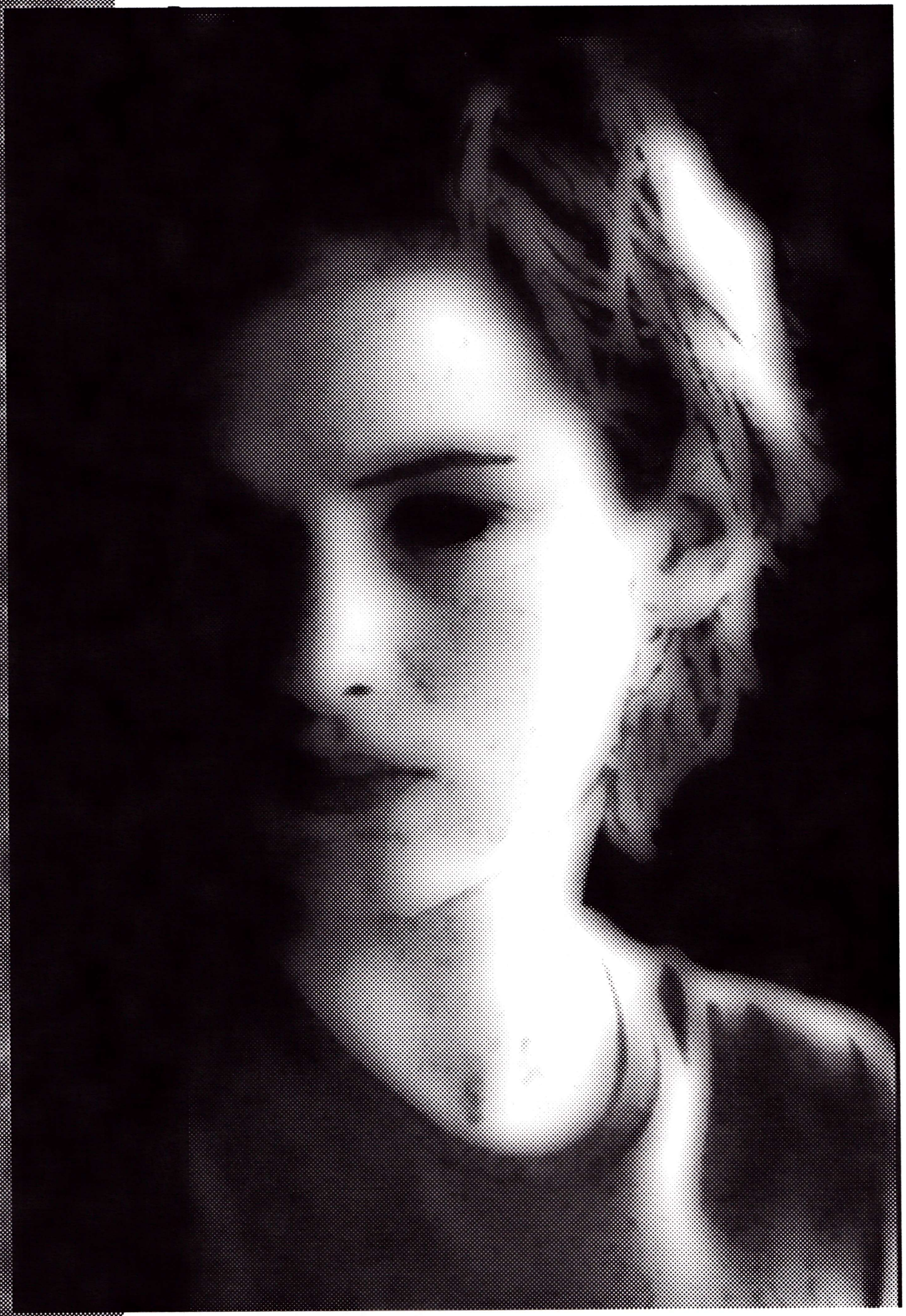


Section 5

Handling



Play

"Bargain Basement"
---Part Five

The minute they stepped from behind their cover, there were five pistols in their faces.

"Hold it!" One of the Orderlies approached, slowly, gun at the ready. The fluorescent glow that ran along the arms of his uniform cast strange shadows against the wall, and backlit his face in a particularly unpleasant manner. "What are you lot doing here?" Two of the Orderlies held leashes wrapped securely around their free hands, and at the end of each leash strained one of the massive, snarling dogs called Rocks — Jason in particular noticed the numerous sharp teeth the beasts possessed, and shrank back closer to Mary and the shelter they had just abandoned.

"We're practicing, of course," Marc informed him blandly. "It's nice and quiet, and nobody yells at us to pipe down. We're working on a new song — would you like to hear?" And, without waiting for a response, he began to beat the drum again. Jason and Mary both stared at him, astonished, until he turned and glanced back at them over his shoulder.

"Jeannie, go ahead and start clapping. Robert, I'll give you a nod when you start whistling, as usual. Ready?" They stared for another second, then nodded — Mary forced herself to uncurl the fists at her sides and began to clap in time with Marc's tune. Jason, forcibly pushing the two growling dogs from his mind, pursed his lips, a thin, reedy whistle emerging slowly to waft through the drum beat. The Squad of Orderlies stared at the three Inmates, watching the odd little performance for a moment, but when Marc nodded and Jason began to twist and sway to the music, still whistling as best he could, the first Orderly stepped forward again.

"Okay, okay, knock it off." He gestured with his pistol for emphasis, and the music stopped.

"Everyone's a critic," Marc muttered, just loud enough for everyone to hear, and the Orderly glared at him but didn't reply.

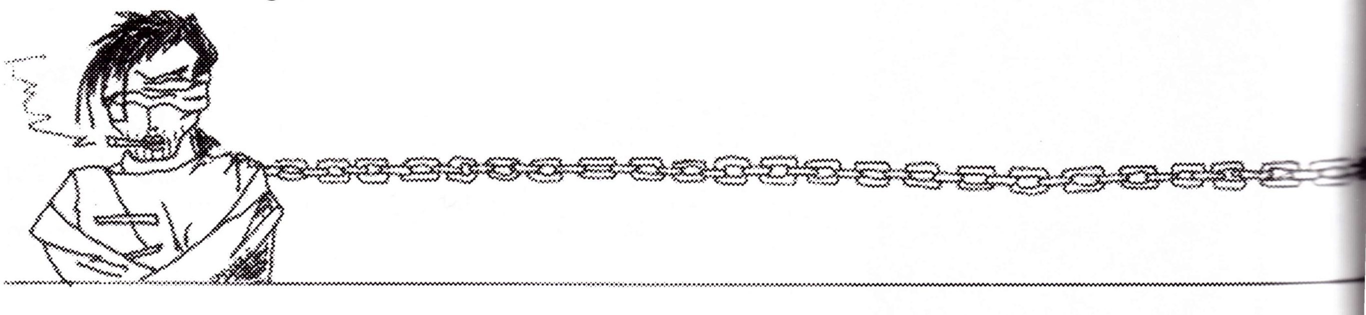
"Have you seen anyone else around here?" He finally asked, and Marc frowned.

"No, not that I recall. Jeannie, Robert, have you?"

Mary shook her head, but Jason hesitated for a second — and two of the Orderlies closed in on him. Fortunately, the two with the Rocks stayed behind, in their original positions.

"What?" the Orderly to his left demanded, staring down at him. "What did you see?"

"Well, nothing, really," Jason finally admitted, not meeting their eyes. "But I thought I heard something a little while back, like people digging. They didn't hear it, though," a twist of his head indicated Marc and Mary, "so I figured it was



probably just a snake or something.”

“Where was this?’

Jason squinted, as if trying to see the image in his head. “It was a greenish building, one story, over that way somewhere.” He gestured to the left, the way they had come. “We’ve only been out since sundown, so it can’t be too far away, but I forget exactly where.”

The Orderlies regrouped and held a whispered conference. Then their leader addressed the three friends. “All right, go back about your business.” And, as they were leaving, he grinned back at them for a moment. “You, with the wig, you’re not bad, and the little guy’s okay, but the big girl needs some serious work on her rhythm.”

“Why you . . .” Mary took a step towards him, and the other two each grabbed an arm to restrain her — fortunately, the Orderly didn’t even look back, and in a moment they and their dogs had rounded a corner and were out of sight.

“What the hell were you trying to do?” Marc demanded as soon as they were alone again. “I get us clear, and you almost foul it up by attacking them?”

“He said I had no rhythm,” Mary seethed, and shook her arms free.

“And?”

She glared first at Marc, and then at Jason. “No one says that about me!”

Jason shrugged. “Well, whatever — the important thing is, they’re gone.”

“What was all that about a greenish building?” Marc was carefully repacking the drum in his bag, and Mary had retrieved her guns and was checking them over.

“Oh, that.” Jason laughed and rubbed the back of his neck. “I noticed it on the way in — it’s about half an hour from here. I saw a Trapper near there once, and I think there’s a whole bunch of them in there.”

“Heh!” Mary reholstered her guns and straightened up, a wide grin on her face. “Those nasty little snakes ought to keep the Squad busy.”

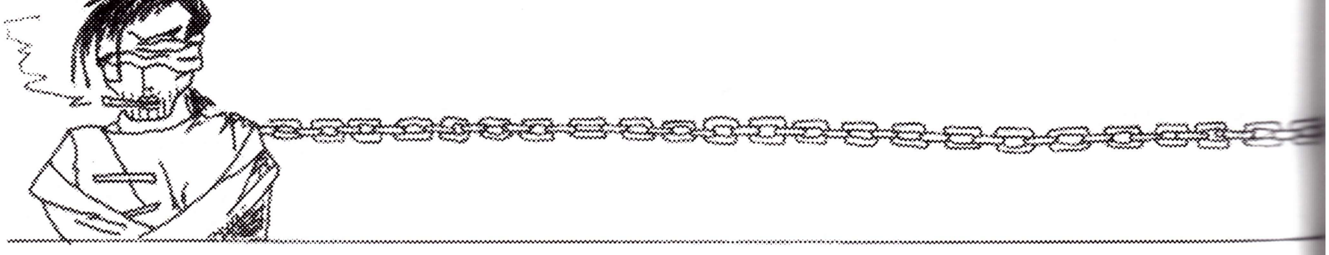
“Exactly — leaving us free to work undisturbed.” Jason glanced at his two partners. “Shall we?”

Atmosphere

A good game is made up of several parts, provided by several different groups or individuals. The author supplies a general background, rules, some basic ideas, and notions that might get the gamemaster thinking. The players provide characters, action, spontaneity, and feeling to the plot. But the gamemaster is responsible for inventing an interesting story, for describing a game's particular setting and the actions that take place within it, for giving the characters motivation to act together, and for shaping the general atmosphere of the piece. Atmosphere is one of the most important aspects of a game, creating a mood in which everything else is said and done. And yet it is often the least apparent, because it is usually handled with small objects or sounds that are not specifically referred to — unlike the plot, which is openly described, and the characters, who act upon one another.

Atmosphere is affected by several different things, including props, music, lighting, and voice. Props can mean anything from a hand-drawn map of the Ward to a genuine straitjacket to a finger puppet that a Psychotic or DID character talks (and listens) to — the important thing is where to draw the line. Too many props can create a campy, tongue-in-cheek feel, but they can also make everything a bit surreal and often very spooky — not in terms of the story, but in terms of the actual reality ("Alex, I know your character is Homicidal — now please put down that cleaver."). Music is always an excellent device for setting the mood, and it is usually a good idea to have a selection of music on hand, with different styles played at appropriate moments. Hard rock is very good for combat, with its fast beat and harsh sounds, while slow, brooding instrumentals or opera fit with mystery, tension, and scenes of unspecified danger. I avoid songs with lyrics, because those distract from what I and the players are saying, but movie scores are perfect for dark, creepy games. Lighting also creates tension and suspense — turning off all but a single lamp or a candelabra offers a dim setting appropriate to confusion and mystery, and suddenly flicking on the lights is an excellent simulation of surprise. And the gamemaster's voice can be pitched to match specific characters: high for innocuous passerby and deep and slow for sinister opponents.

The general tone of *Asylum*, as based on the background events and the current system, is deadly dark and serious — a shadowy, troubled world where people who are already ill-adjusted to reality struggle to survive in an uncaring world. However, if you choose to, *Asylum* could be played completely loony for laughs, as a world where everyone is out of their minds and therefore unconcerned with everyday cares — this would probably involve ignoring the conflict and desperation that exists in the Wards and focusing on the flights of fancy many Inmates are subject to. Or you can cast your version of the world as falling somewhere in between. It's your choice



— simply make sure that your props and music, lighting and voice reflect the decision you've made.

Direction

Asylum has a very open-ended structure to it, in that it can be approached and played (and expanded) in a number of ways. If you prefer to offer only one storyline and force the characters to become involved, that is your choice. But even if you decide to let the characters pick their own course from several options, therefore creating the possibility that they may decide to wander off in a completely unexpected direction or take some action that you weren't expecting, there are always initial hooks that draw the characters in. Each plot hook is the start of a story, and each story must have a goal of some sort — the type of goal helps determine the story's direction, tone, pacing, etc. It helps, therefore, to select a goal first, then shape the plot around that — you should probably prepare more than one, in order to be ready for any course of action the group might eventually choose.

First of all, there are basic goals or themes to be considered. The most common ones are:

Survival: Obviously, this is usually everyone's first priority (although, for those who are either Obsessed or Dependent that may not be the case). But whatever else you want to do usually requires your continued existence to manage it.

Personal freedom: After making sure that you will be alive, it is important to be free, to have control over your own actions and your own destiny.

Friendship/Love: Love is what makes the world go round. More importantly, it is what bonds you to other people, allowing you to trust others and to share with them both the risks and the rewards.

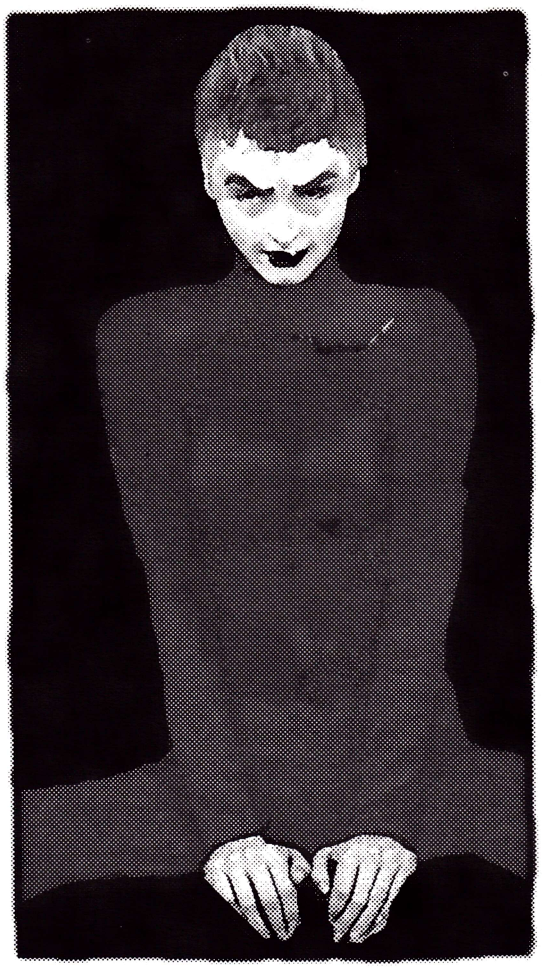
Knowledge: Knowledge is power, whether it is technological learning from the past or current information on the next food shipment and the fact that it will be unguarded. In order to act wisely, we must know everything concerning our actions and our goals.

Vengeance: In a world where strong relationships are hard to come by, anyone who either betrays a trust or injures a loved one needs to be taught a lesson.

Control/Power: Even in Asylum, it pays to be on top. The wealthy have privileges, and wealth is measured not only by how many doses or bullets you have but also be how many people you have on your side and what effect you can have on your surroundings.

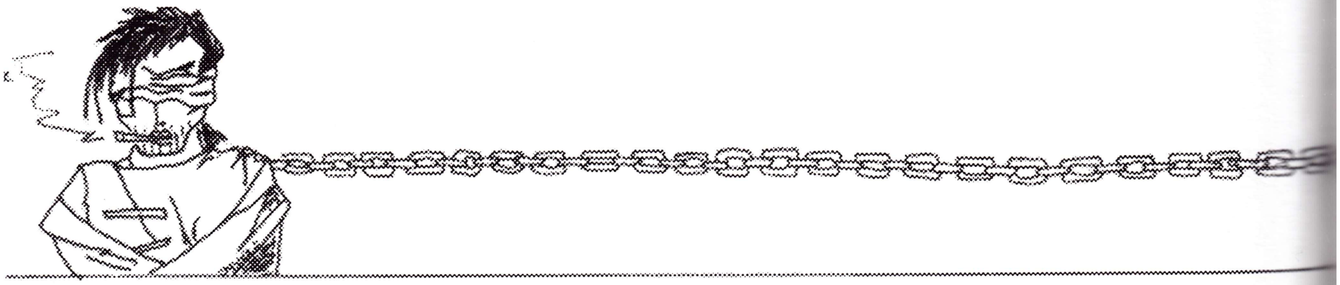
Here are a few possible structures based on these goals:

Escapes: The characters are fleeing from something — usually a person, although it could be a disease or a natural disaster. The goal is survival, pure and simple, although other aspects could also be woven in — such as if, for example, the characters were fleeing from the Warden because they had stolen a new device that would enable its wielder to take control of an entire Ward single-handedly (this sort of story involves greed and power in addition to the matter of survival). Escapes usually begin in the Ward and go into the Wastelands, either to get somewhere else (Fields or another Ward) or as the final destination. Naturally, you can escape from one group in a Ward by fleeing to a different section of the city, but that is on a smaller scale and assumes that the pursuer cannot easily reach the other side.



Explorations: These are arduous journeys into the unknown and tend to focus around a quest for knowledge. Often a particular item, individual, or piece of information is sought, especially something from the pre-disaster past — technology, perhaps, or medicine, or just general information. Explorations can take place within the Ward itself, due to the wide variety of wrecked buildings that have stood deserted for decades. Offices is also an excellent choice because few Inmates ever voluntarily go there, and fewer leave in one piece. The Wastelands are also an ideal place to explore — especially the ruined cities that lie here and there about the barren stretches of dirt and rock.

Rescues: These are fairly straightforward — a friend, relative, or



associate has been taken away by someone, and the characters set out to bring him or her (or them) back. Rescues tend to take place within the Ward, involving Inmates who have been arrested by the Orderlies and dragged off to the House of Solitude, but there are also gangs in the Ward and marauders in the Wastelands. Rescues are one of the most high-pressure situations, because the captive is usually only held for a short period of time and then disposed of, so time is of the essence. Scourges are a type of rescue where the endangered party is a large group — the attacker can be a plague, a drought, a vicious band of would-be executioners, and usually people have already begun to succumb. Therefore a cure/solution must be found before the entire Ward (or worse) is destroyed

Coups: These are bids for power and control, and the most obvious version is attempting to wrest control of the Ward from the Warden and his/her Staff. Coups can also be attempted on a smaller scale: within a neighborhood or outside the Ward within one of the gangs that prowl the Wastelands. A coup can be built upon political maneuvering, military might, economic control, or even general popular support. Once a Coup is begun, it usually becomes a matter of survival as well as of power, because if your rival wins he/she will try and take the safe route and eliminate you before you start any more trouble.

Sabotage: Sabotage can be a desire for power, but it usually involves vengeance first and foremost — it is less a question of trying to win something away from your opponents than an attempt to make them pay for some past injustice. This is a subtle tactic, involving a lot of stealth and trickery, and is best when handled by a small group because a large number tends to be clumsy and obvious. The most obvious target, as always, is the Warden and the Staff, particularly the Orderlies who often torment Inmates for fun.

Advice

First of all, there is one basic rule that applies to running any game — never let your players see you sweat. They should always think that you know what you're doing, that you've at least prepared for what's happening even if you didn't actually expect it to occur. *Asylum* is full of possibilities, with danger and intrigue and comedy lurking around every corner, so there should never be a situation where you can't think of anything to do. If worst comes to worst, just make up an NPC (non-player character) and throw him or her at the players, and figure out what's going to occur next while watching how they interact.

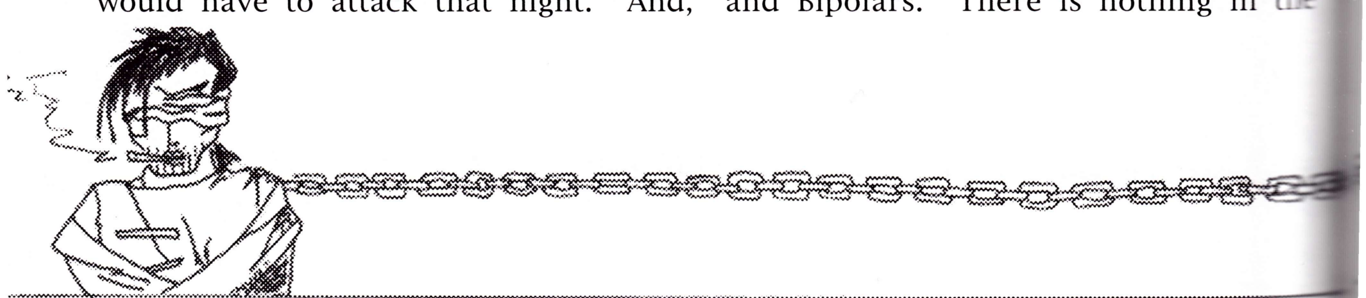
One thing to watch out for is playing time versus game time. *Asylum* is the sort of game where it can easily take two hours to roleplay twenty minutes, especially if the players have split up. On the other hand, at some points in the game there will be moments when nothing is really going on — when the characters are asleep, when they're just wandering around the Ward with no particular goal, etc. If you have something in mind, this is a good opportunity to throw it at them — a surprise raid by the Orderlies or an Almanac with some vital information, for example. If you don't have anything in mind, don't make everyone sit and wait out the time. A simple "the next few hours pass uneventfully" cuts right past the interim and gets you back to the action.

Almanacs are of key importance to this game, because they seem to know almost everything, and will happily share it with anyone who can meet their price. They are ideal for revealing clues, starting plots, and complicating situations. One of the players in the original playtest group had an Almanac named Drake, who not only shared information but created it — he was a Sociopath, and he decided that the easiest way to get the news was to cause it to happen. He would spread rumors and create dangerous situations, which he would then sell information about to all of the other sides. For example, he once told a gang of Alchemists that the Orderlies were planning to attack them as early as that same night, then told the Orderlies that the Alchemists had been warned and would be prepared to repel any attack by tomorrow — the Orderlies of course decided that, based on this information, they would have to attack that night. And, naturally, each side paid Drake for this valuable information.

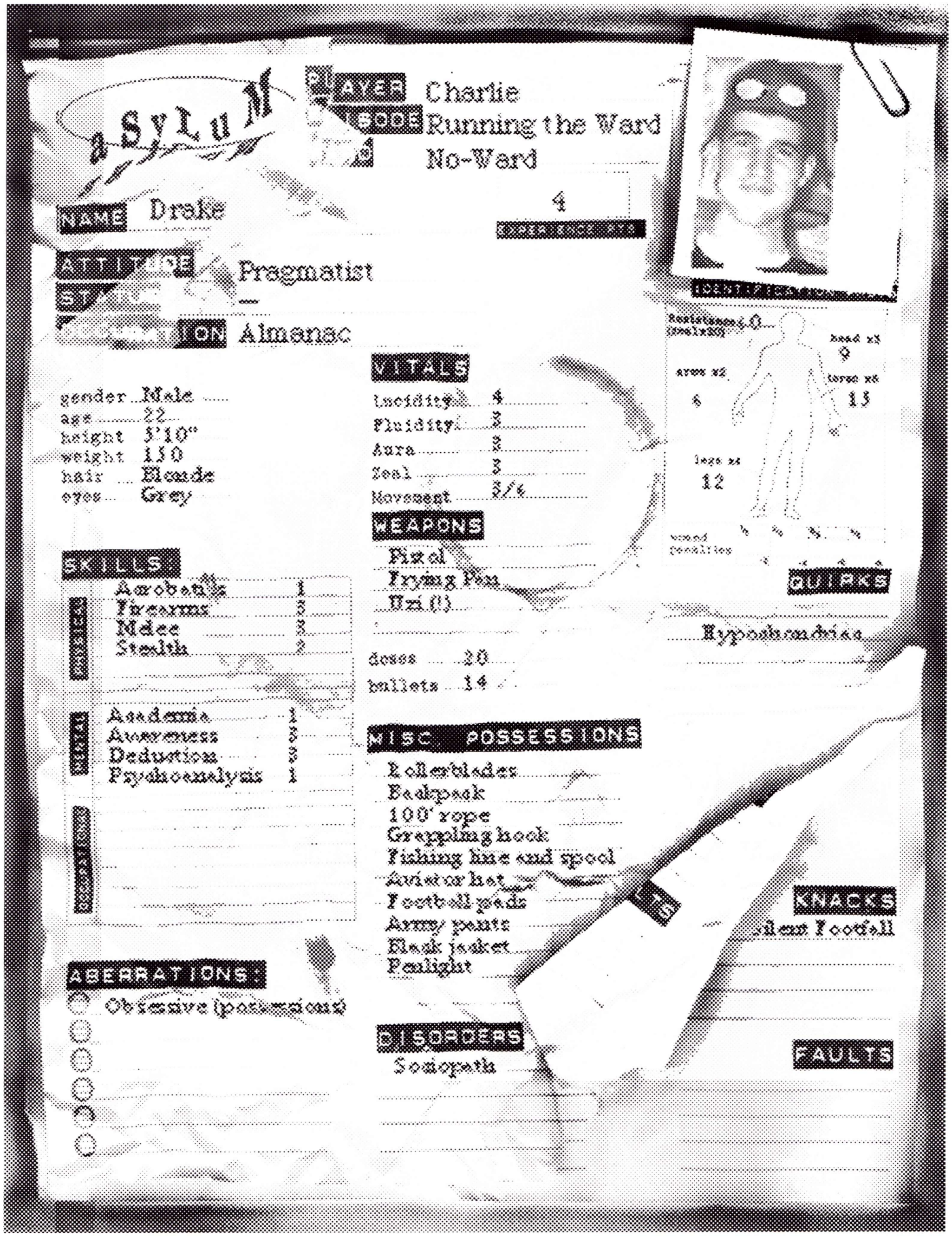
I've included Drake's character information below, so that you can use him in your own game if you need someone to stir things up a bit. He never actually lies to people, but sometimes when he tells them that an opponent is about to do something he neglects to mention that it was his information that originally inspired that activity.

Something else to watch for is a scene change — as the gamemaster, it is up to you when one scene ends and another starts. Remember that, at the start of each scene, all of the characters present must Draw all of their Aberrations, so their personalities and goals may change drastically — this is an excellent way to add excitement to a situation, and it is sometimes dramatically appropriate to let a player NOT Draw right at the start of the scene (it's easy to forget to do so, and you simply don't remind them immediately) and then remind them about it at a delicate moment (for example, a character is trying to negotiate peacefully with a Squad of Orderlies, and doing a fair job of it — until you remind him that he forgot to Draw his Homicidal tendencies for that scene). This is a bit underhanded, and you shouldn't abuse it — don't wait half an hour for that crucial moment to arrive. However, it can be very effective, and, after all, you have a lot to keep track of, too — is it your fault if you momentarily forgot to remind him to Draw for it?

Keep a close eye on those players who are managing multiple-player DIDs and Bipolars. There is nothing in the



rules that decrees how often the switches should take place, since part of the fun is letting them fight for dominance, but at the same time it could become boring if one character maintains control for, say, three full nights. As GM, you are entirely within your rights to cause the players to trade off, whether at the start of a night or at a sensitive moment of play, and ensuring some balance helps



AYER Charlie
SODE Running the Ward
No-Ward

NAME Drake

4
EXPERIENCE PTS

ATTIT DE Pragmatist
ST —
ION Almanac

gender Male
age 22
height 5'10"
weight 130
hair Blonde
eyes Grey

VITALS
Lucidity 4
Fluidity 3
Aura 3
Zeal 3
Movement 3/6

IDENTIFICATION

Resistance 6.0
(Zeal x20)
head x3 9
arms x2 6
torso x5 15
legs x4 12
wound penalties

SKILLS:
Acrobatics 1
Firearms 3
Melee 3
Stealth 2

Academia 1
Awareness 3
Deduction 3
Psychoanalysis 1

WEAPONS
Pistol
Frying Pan
Uzi (!)

doses 20
bullets 14

QUIRKS
Hypochondriac

MISC. POSSESSIONS
Rollerblades
Backpack
100' rope
Grappling hook
Fishing line and spool
Aviator hat
Football pads
Army pants
Black jacket
Penlight

KNACKS
ilent Footfall

ABERRATIONS:
○ Obsessive (possessions)
○
○
○
○
○

DISORDERS
Sociopath

FAULTS

make sure that everyone gets a chance to get in on the fun.

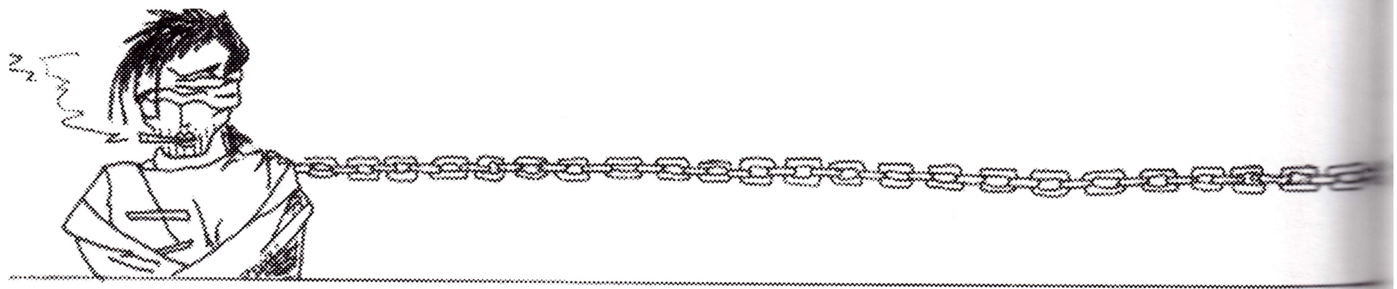
Perhaps the most important thing is a sense of contrast. Comical games aren't as funny if every event and character in them is always done for laughs, and spooky stories don't usually work as well if every single scene and image is dripping with ominous shadowy terror. You need to throw in some contrast, to increase the mood, so that players don't get complacent — a moment of grave danger in the middle of an amusing scenario shakes them up a bit, and after that the comedy is that much more amusing, because it is a relief from that brief sense of risk. Likewise, a clownish character and a brief slapstick encounter allows for a breather from the horror and the gloom, and after such a splash of color and light the darkness is that much more oppressive. It also keeps them on their toes — they never quite know what to expect, can never be sure that the next corner won't yield a second funny moment or a surprisingly dangerous situation, and that keeps things interesting for everyone involved, you as well as them.

Getting Along

Whenever two player characters meet for the first time, it is up to them to work out and act out how they act and how they respond to each other — whether they become friendly, ignore each other, or fight to the death. When a player character or a group meets an NPC, it is up to you to determine what the NPC's response to him/her/them will be. Major NPCs usually already have some sort of personality, so you know how they will react — but minor NPCs, the extras, aren't worth wasting that much time on.

Below is a table that you can Draw on to determine how an average NPC will react to an average player character. Remember that the word "average" is crucial here — if there is any sort of history between the two, or the NPC has a Disorder, Attitude, or Aberration (minor NPCs aren't worth assigning Quirks to) that may affect personal interaction, you need to take that into account. Also remember the player character's Aura — higher Aura gives a bonus to this Draw, while low Aura detracts from it (see page 77).

There is a reason the table is here in the gamemaster's section and not in the player character's section or among the general rules — no matter how smooth a character is, how successful he/she has proven in making friends and influencing people, it is impossible to tell how anyone will respond in a first encounter. After all, everyone is insane. So make the Draw, don't tell the player the result, and have the NPC act accordingly.



NPC Reaction Table

black, black	Hates the character instantly, to the point of attacking him or her.
black, red	Despises the character, and will try and provoke a fight.
red, red	Dislikes the character, and will try and hinder him/her/them.
red, green	Disapproves of the character and will avoid him or her and hinder in small ways.
green, green	Doesn't care either way, and will neither hinder nor help.
green, blue	Likes the character and will help in minor ways.
blue, blue	Respects the character, and will help in any way that does not put him/herself in danger.
blue, white	Admires the character, and will help in any way short of sacrificing own life.
white, white	Loves the character on sight, and will do anything for the character, even throw down his/her own life.

Random Encounters

People are always wandering about in the Ward — there isn't that much to do, so almost everyone has an excess of free time. This means that there are a lot of chance meetings, which can lead to all sorts of situations: useful information or objects at one end and ambushes and muggings at the other. It is almost guaranteed, however, that at some point one or more of the player characters will be walking the streets or the Beltway, either searching for other people or simply seeing what (and who) turns up. Some GMs prefer to shape minor NPCs, start them out as completely neutral, and use the players' actions and the NPC Reaction Table to determine how they will relate to the character(s). Others have a more specific end result in mind for each encounter. For those who wish to handle these occurrences on their own, shaping them to suit their desires/goals — have fun. But for those who desire guidelines, a series of tables has been placed below — note, however, that, as usual, this is merely a suggested method, and can be altered to fit your own needs and desires. Also remember that various situations can alter who is about and where — the time of day, the general state of stability in the Ward, the Status of the player character(s) in question, any rumors that may be about, etc.

Random Encounters

black, black	hostiles — Draw on Hostiles Table, below
black, red	an unfamiliar Inmate with violent tendencies
red, red	an unfamiliar Inmate, no occupation
red, green	an unfamiliar Inmate with an Occupation
green, green	an Inmate who's heard of you but never met you
green, blue	an Inmate, with no Occupation, who knows you by name
blue, blue	an Inmate, with an Occupation, who knows you by name
blue, white	a familiar Inmate, friendly but generally useless
white, white	allies — Draw on Allies Table, below

Hostiles

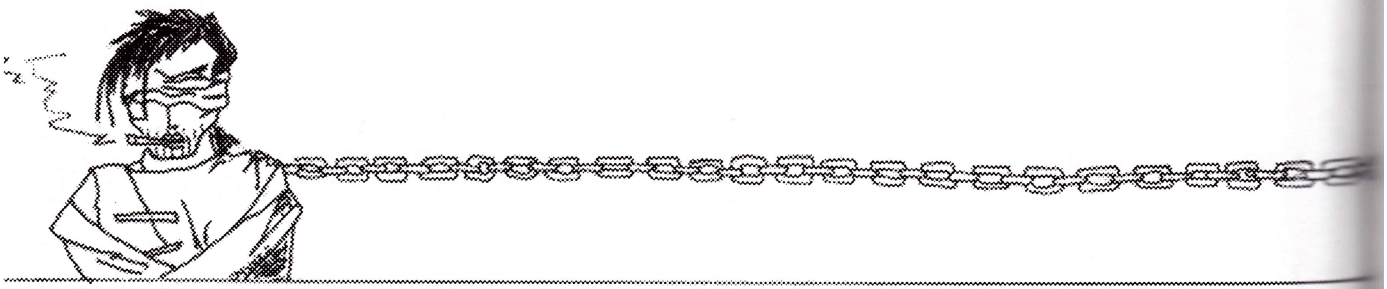
black, black	a Squad of Orderlies looking for a victim
black, red	a gang (5+) looking for a victim
red, red	an Orderly looking for a victim
red, green	a violent Inmate looking for a victim
green, green	an Inmate who hates you for some reason
green, blue	a pair of thieves, out to mug someone
blue, blue	a lone thief, out to mug someone
blue, white	an Inmate who you owe money
white, white	an Inmate who you injured in the past

Allies

black, black	an Inmate who has just been mugged
black, red	an Inmate you worked for once
red, red	an Inmate you hired once
red, green	an Inmate you know well
green, green	an Almanac
green, blue	an Inmate who you helped once
blue, blue	an Almanac with useful information
blue, white	an Orderly in a generous mood
white, white	an Inmate who wants to repay a debt to you

Possessions
(for use if you mug the people you encounter)

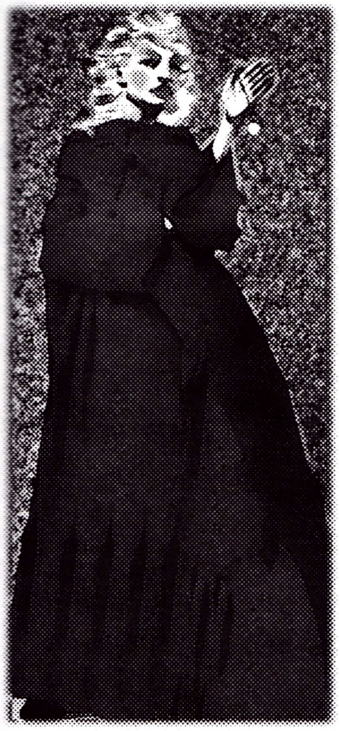
black, black	1 dose
black, red	3 doses
red, red	6 doses



red, green	a knife
green, green	a knife, two bullets
green, blue	a knife and 4+ bullets/a pistol
blue, blue	a pistol, 4+ bullets
blue, white	a pistol, 4+ bullets, knife
white, white	a pistol, 4+ bullets, knife, useful/valuable small item

Note: Inmates who practice Occupations may also have the tools of their trade on them — how many is up to the gamemaster's discretion.

Sands in the Hourglass



Most Inmates live into their fifties, barring accident or malice, and so most characters will be somewhere between twenty and forty — old enough to be considered adult and young enough to still be reasonably spry. Some may choose to play older characters, however, and others younger, and of course some NPCs can and will fall into these areas, so it is good to be prepared.

Mental illness is in part genetic but most of it is environmentally-based, the effect of being raised by and surrounded by others who have their own disorders. Inmates start out life completely "sane," but by the time they are four or five they have already gained their first Aberration, strictly at an Early level. Of course, most Inmates are incapable of fending for themselves at such an age, and so are dependent upon parents or some other form of guardian.

By the time they are ten most Inmates have determined whether they wish to learn an Occupation or not, and their Aberration has moved to an Advanced level. It is also around this age that they are allowed outside more, and so discover more about the Ward and its other inhabitants. This is an active, inquisitive time, filled with questions and pranks and new friends.

At fourteen an Occupation has been chosen and a teacher/master found — the boy or girl is apprenticed and moves in with the master, learning the trade. Even so, most Inmates at this age are allowed to run free for part of the day and have a small group of friends, as well as several favorite places and activities. For those who have an Occupation, their Aberration stays at its Advanced stage. For everyone else, the Aberration is now at an Extreme level.

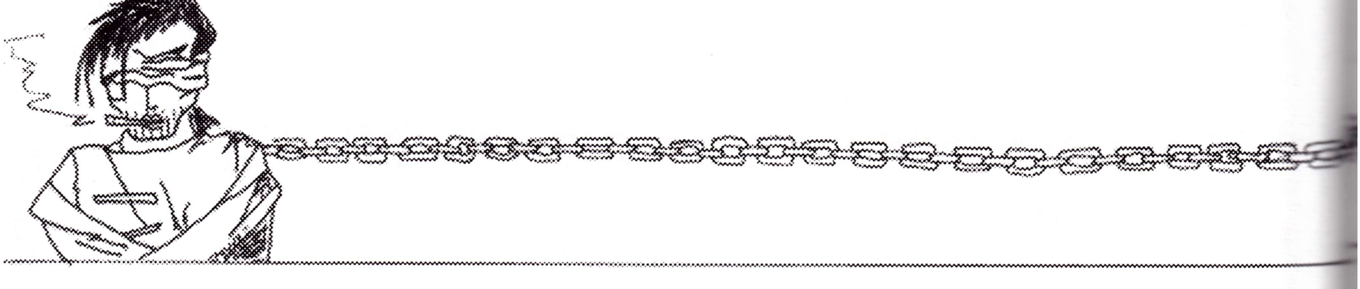
By the time Inmates are sixteen, they have started to learn their Occupation or have become firmly settled into not doing much with their lives. This is also a highly social period, when hormones are in full swing and the other sex is completely fascinating. For those who are Occupied, their Aberration now goes to Extreme as teaching slacks off and they are freed from rigorous training to once again acknowledge the insanity of the world around them. For those without Occupations, their Aberration now becomes a full-fledged Disorder.

At eighteen, the mental decay has begun to slow, now that puberty is largely over with and a daily routine has been settled into. Inmates are ready to open their own practice by this point, unless they are a particularly slow pupil, and they move out of their teacher's home and find their own lodgings and set up shop. This is a stressful time, and their Aberration flares up, transforming into a Disorder. Those without Occupations have already moved out and found friends of a like mind (if there are any), and are firmly entrenched in daily habits, hobbies (if any), and general tendencies. They now add another Early Aberration, as the apathy eats at their brain.

No more real change occurs until Inmates reach thirty-five or so, unless they are subjected to a severe shock of some sort or are engaged in more activities of a more rousing and stressful nature (Player characters, for example, tend to lead more active lives than most). For ten years the mental state is relatively stable, as is the body. Then things begin to decay again.

At thirty-five most Inmates begin to realize that they have lived more than half of their life and that the end is now in sight — in other words, they have a mid-life crisis. This often results in people quitting their lifelong Occupation and either trying to learn a new one or else just giving up on being productive and wallowing in the futility of Ward life. For those who are already in such states, they finally realize that it is probably too late to do anything very useful with themselves, and bemoan the waste of their talents. Another Aberration is Drawn, still at Easy, and some people lose their Occupation from lack of practice.

At forty it has fully sunk in that life is almost over, and many attempt to recapture lost youth, drowning their fears and their regrets in pranks, amours, contests, and other risky



endeavors. Often this is a covert attempt to die and end the misery they know will come. Of those who still cling to their Occupations, half finally quit, while the others work feverishly on some masterwork, desperate to create something that will survive them. Draw another Aberration, this time at Advanced level — if it is the same as one you already possess at either Advanced or Extreme, make that Aberration a Disorder and Draw another one at Easy.

At forty-five the final stages have set in — this is when most Inmates seat themselves in the Lounge, in front of the screen, and simply let themselves be zoned by the psychedelic patterns. Many either forget to eat or consciously choose not to and starve to death. Others lose all sense of reality and let their madness overtake them. Any Aberrations become Disorders at this point.

By the time an Inmate is fifty he or she is either a complete vegetable or completely insane. There are exceptions, of course, as there are in every age group — men and women with strong wills and a firm sense of purpose and value manage to survive into their sixties and older, still at their Occupation and still improving. The majority, however, are not so stubborn, and they gradually waste away or else injure themselves and die unattended.

Obviously, there is also the matter of Vitals and Skills for such characters (but only if they are a player character or a major NPC — minor ones are not important enough to make such distinctions for). Fluidity is usually high in younger people, while Zeal is low. Lucidity fades as one grows older, and Zeal rises until around thirty and then begins to fall, but Aura can not only survive but even increase as time goes on. Skills obviously rise as one grows older, until around forty when they usually start to decrease as well. Individual gamemasters are encouraged to determine for themselves how to handle such things, either

by creating a chart or simply deciding each case on an individual basis. The middle-age, between twenty and thirty-five, is when Inmates tend to be strongest of both mind and body — not quite as quick as when they were young, and perhaps a bit more confused, but hardened and experienced and accustomed to other people. But there are, of course, exceptions to everything.

A Word on the Paranormal

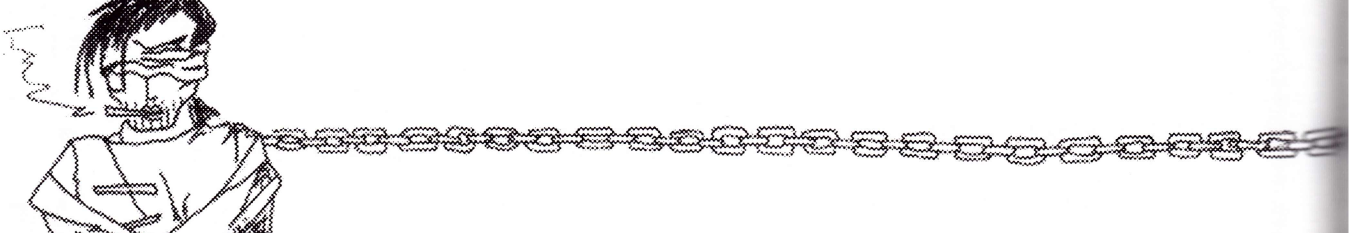
Two things that have always gone hand-in-hand are mental disorders and paranormal ability/phenomena. This being the case, you may wonder why such abilities and events are not included in *Asylum*. There is one simple reason for this —

I chose not to have them present.

Do not mistake me — I fully believe in the possibility (if not necessarily the reality) of such abilities as telepathy, psychokinesis, pyrokinesis, clairvoyance, and more. And, certainly, if one grants the general theory that these abilities remain latent in all of us but are housed in those portions of the brain that are not normally used, then it makes sense to connect such abilities to those whose minds work differently from the norm — perhaps they are tapping into those other regions, and have access to things that still lie dormant in the rest of humanity.

Perhaps. But that is not what *Asylum* is about. It is a world where everyone is plagued with mental illness, where the so-called "sane individual" is a myth of the past, and where every day is a fight for survival against an uncaring world and a disordered society. I felt that, while the presence of paranormal abilities would certainly add more excitement to the game, it would also be out of place, since people with any reliable control over such an ability could take over their Ward, convince other paranormals to join them, and then take over all of Asylum, creating a country run by psionic overlords.

If that is what you wish to do with your campaign, so be it — this game is yours to do with as you wish, so you

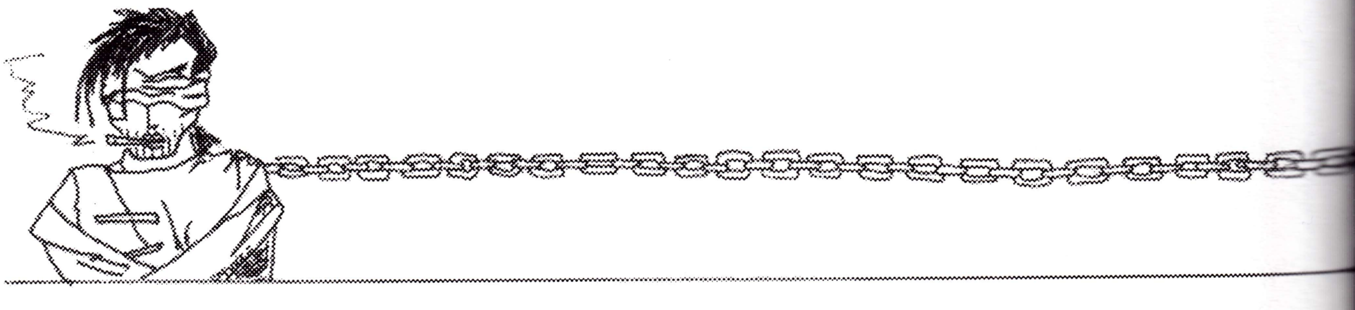


should feel free to introduce telepaths and telekines to your game. If I receive comments from a large number of people requesting such material, I will write a supplement to detail some of the possibilities. In the meantime, such embellishments are outside the original scope of the game, and so are entirely your own. If you do choose to include paranormal abilities, however, remember that such things can be as much a curse as a blessing, and that everything has its price. Especially in Asylum.

Sources of Inspiration

These are movies that have the right feel for *Asylum* because they deal with the insane, with fragmented societies in an apocalyptic future, with altered views of reality, or with some combination of them.

Akira
Aliens 3
Altered States
Blade Runner
A Boy and His Dog
Brazil
A Clockwork Orange
Cool World
The Crow
The Crow 2: City of Angels
Damnation Alley
Dracula
Escape from New York
The Fisher King
Hardware
1984
No Escape
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest
The Prisoner (television series)
The Road Warrior
Silence of the Lambs
Streets of Fire
12 Monkeys
Twin Peaks
Pink Floyd's The Wall



ection 6

Illward

"Warded by the Wind"

"Bargain Basement"
-- Part Six

"Well?" Mary rubbed her hands together and blew on them, more to keep herself occupied than out of any real chill — even with the thin breeze that stole through the walls and scuffed along buildings this close to the edge of the Ward, the temperature was still quite bearable. The real problem was that, here inside the shattered building, the motionless rubble held the silence of an old tomb, and the lack of noise and violence was taking a toll on Mary's action-oriented disposition.

"Do you want to do this?" Somewhere in the last two blocks, Marc had begun arguing with himself, his voice growing louder and louder and finally breaking into a string of curses, and the minute the first curse passed his lips he was gone, and Caustic had returned — he had insisted on stashing the wig in the very bottom of his pack before he moved another step, and several times since had paused to smear dirt on his pants and sleeves with a wicked grin. Now he stood in front of the sign Jason had found the day before, and traced the age-eroded letters with a blunt fingertip. Finally, however, he laughed and let his hand fall to his side.

RAILROAD
CROSSING

"Okay." And with that one word, Caustic reached for the lock.

"NO!" Both Mary and Jason leapt to stop him, but Caustic waved them back and gave the lock a sharp tug — there was a pathetic snap as the last bit of metal gave way, and then it fell apart in his hand. He tossed it aside and, while the others looked on in horror, unable to stop him, he reached for the door knob, turned it — and pulled the door open with a protesting squeal.

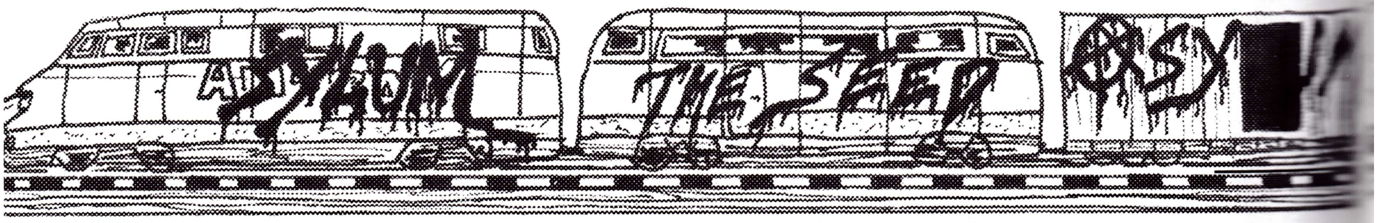
"Well, let's see what's down here." Caustic produced a flashlight from somewhere in his pack and flipped it on, shining it down the stairwell. All that it revealed was a landing down below, and the remnant of a ceiling light hanging halfway down the stairs.

"But what about the sign?" Jason's eyes still kept sliding back to the lettered square, but the other man just laughed.

"It says to make sure the lights are out before you leave for the night. Are you two coming?" And, without waiting for an answer, he started down the stairs.

"It what?!" Mary glared at Caustic's back, then turned and focused her ire on Jason. "You mean there isn't any trap? We could have done this on our own, without . . . ."

"You could have," came the reply from down the stairs, "but you might have



been signing your own death warrant. There's a reason Jason couldn't read the damn thing — it's in German."

"German?"

"It's an old language, and almost nobody uses it now — that's why you needed a Scribe. So now we know it's safe to come on down — there could still be traps down here, too." Caustic had almost reached the bottom now, and he turned and shone the flashlight back up at them, its beam barely reaching Mary's face. "Isn't it better to split whatever's here in thirds and be alive to spend it than to split it in half and maybe die trying to get it?"

"He's right," Jason admitted, and he stepped towards the light, appealing to Mary with his eyes. "Come on, Mary. We came this far — we have to find out what's down there."

"Oh, all right. But don't expect me to thank him."

"I'm touched," came the reply from below. "Now get on down here — there's a door here, and this lock isn't coming apart so easily."

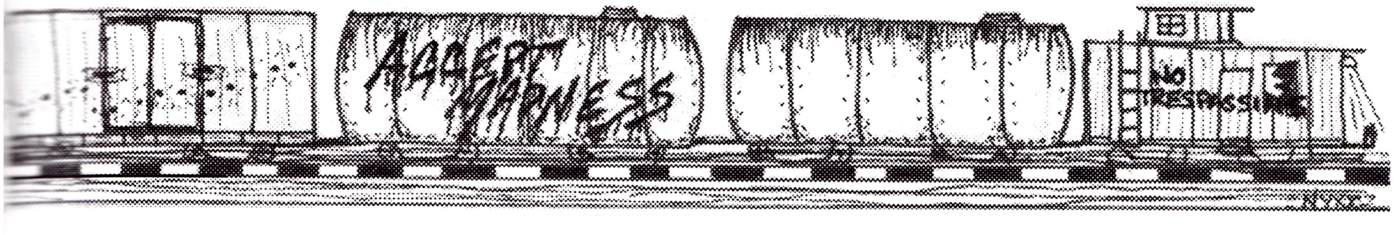
Mary brightened at that. "Finally, something to break — that I'm good at." And she hurried down the stairs to vent her anger on the unsuspecting lock. It yielded to her kick, and the door swung open, revealing a single wide room. Shelves lined the walls, and they were stacked high with items, but the flashlight was too weak to reveal their nature. But that didn't matter much.

"We're rich!" Jason caught Mary by the arm and did a little dance, circling around her when she refused to move. "This is great!"

"Don't count those bullets yet," his friend reminded him. "We don't even know what all this stuff is, and then there's the problem of getting it back home without getting shot for it."

"Sure, sure." But Jason wasn't listening — he was squinting to the side, desperately trying to pierce the darkness that veiled their new treasure. "We'll think of something. We got here, didn't we?"

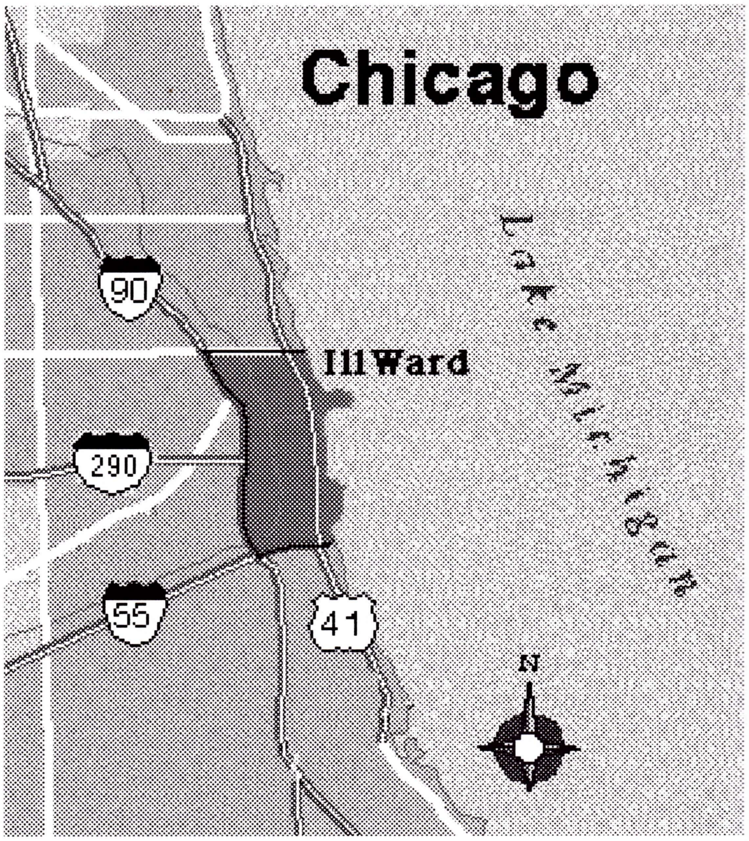
"Yes, we did," Mary admitted as they headed across the room, and her hands strayed to the comfort of her pistols. "Far too easily, if you ask me." But her companions didn't hear her, and she reluctantly followed them towards the mysterious objects — and the uneasy feeling that this was all very, very wrong.



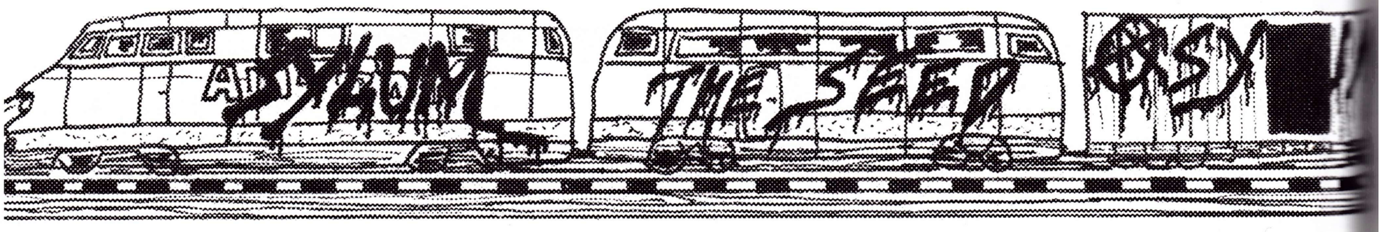
Ancient History

The word “Chicago,” in the language of the Native Americans who originally lived in the area, means “fetid swamp.” Although the area was not aesthetically pleasing, it was an important portage point for the Native Americans — a short land passage connecting several water routes. The first non-Native settler in the region was Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, a black man, who established a trading post on the river in 1779.

The United States won this patch of land away from the Natives in 1794, in the Battle of Fallen Timbers. Nine years later, Fort Dearborn was established at what is now the heart of downtown Chicago. The fort was raided and burned to the ground by the British during the War of 1812, but quickly rebuilt again. A settlement rose up around the new fort just as Illinois achieved statehood in 1818. When Chicago was declared a city in 1837, it had a meager population of four thousand.



Throughout its history, Chicago’s greatest asset has been its location, which has made it perfect as a transportation hub — this was as much true when the region was a portage for Native Americans as it was in the mid-nineteenth century when the railroads came through. Chicago became the center of several rail lines crossing the country, and a welcome rest stop on the long journey from the United States to the western frontiers. Chicago became a freight town as well — the meat industry boomed here, and for decades the city’s stockyards butchered cattle from all across the nation. From this point on, Chicago grew steadily, becoming the second-largest city in the United States. Even the Great Fire of 1871 (started, so legends say, by Mrs. O’Leary’s cow) only slowed the city’s growth — in fact, the wooden buildings that had burnt down were replaced by stone ones, and so in many ways the fire was the cause of the city that still stands today. The world’s



first steel-framework skyscraper was built in Chicago in 1884.

Near the end of the nineteenth century, Chicago swelled yet again, as thousands of European immigrants came to the city, but movement to the suburbs soon began, and during the twentieth century the city's population growth began to slow down. The stock market crash of 1929 put a halt to most major building construction, and by the 1980's Chicago had dropped to the third-largest city.

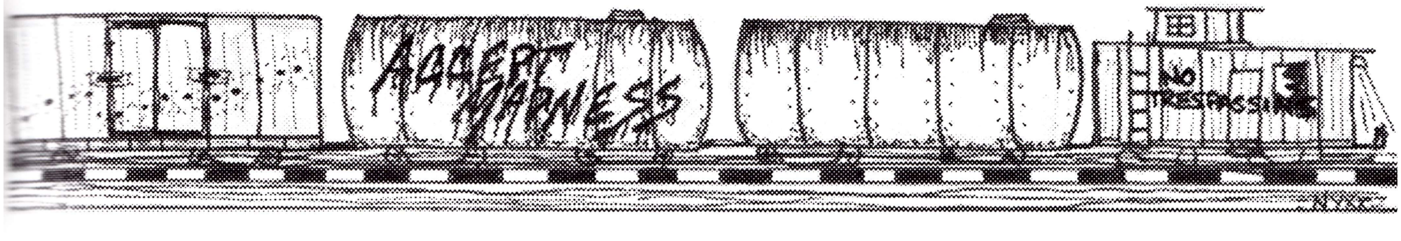
Chicago: The Windy City, the City of the Big Shoulders, Hog Butcher of the World! Home of Elliot Ness and Al Capone, Michael Jordan and Siskel & Ebert, Harry Carey and Richard Daley. What can you say about the city where both deep-dish pizza and sustained nuclear fission were discovered? Surely, in its heyday, Chicago was one of the greatest cities in the world.

Current Events

Unlike New York City, which was confined to a narrow island, Chicago was built over a large area of open land reclaimed from the swamp surrounding the Chicago River. Because they had so much open space, the city grew outward rather than upward so that, unlike its east coast counterpart, Chicago has tall buildings only in the downtown areas of the Loop (on the lake shore south of the river) and Michigan Avenue's "Magnificent Mile," (on the lake shore north of the river). When the government decided to transform the city into yet another Ward, they decided that only these two sections of the city could be sufficiently isolated. This means that more than seventy-five per cent of what was once Chicago lies outside of IllWard's walls, and so the Lunatic Fringe there enjoys luxuries and wealth which far exceed that of most of the Fringes in Asylum. IllWard itself has a population of 300,000, which is only one-tenth the size of Chicago at the end of the twentieth century.

The Perimeter of IllWard was built along the major highways which once connected the downtown area to the outlying suburbs — the Dan Ryan Expressway to the west, the Adlai E. Stevenson Expressway to the south, and Division Street to the north. Thus, what once served as major arteries of transportation now serve to prevent exactly such travel. These highways stood ten to twenty feet above ground level to the west of downtown, and so it was simple enough to build walls supported by these structures. The highways now function as walkways for patrolling Guards, and, in fact, the Perimeters to the north and south have been built to mimic this western boundary in design.

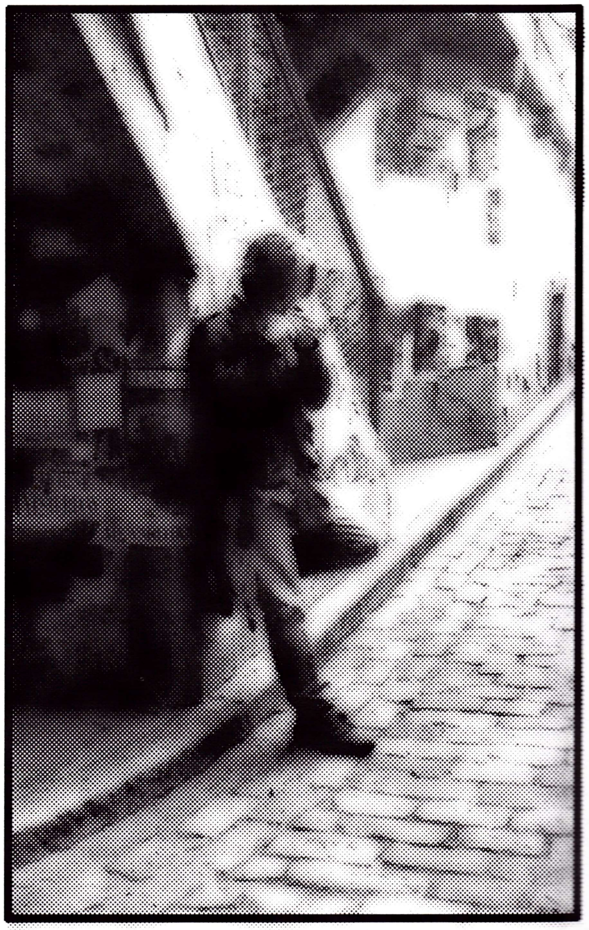
To the east of IllWard is Lake Michigan. The water is even more heavily polluted now than in pre-Wars time, and has taken on a deep orange color. The Lake is populated by hundreds of huge, carnivorous fish, making it virtually impossible to swim or boat out of the Ward. A few brave souls have been rumored to try this, but of course there is no way to tell whether they were successful. Because the marine life itself provides the most effective security measure, the Perimeter along the shore of



the lake consists solely of a fifteen-foot high chain-link fence — very few people are foolish enough to chance it.

IllWard is cut in half by the Chicago River, which runs from the southwest corner of the Ward, near Offices, and then turns west and runs into the Lake. The Orderlies have placed steel grates at either end of the river, to prevent the Lake's resident fish from getting into the Ward. Even so, sometimes small fish sneak their way through and then grow, since once they are in the Ward they can usually find a steady supply of careless Inmates. Of course, the river, where it runs through the Ward, has been covered with more grating, ostensibly to prevent Inmates from being eaten, but also to keep Inmates from trying to escape. These grates are quite sturdy, and some Inmates enjoy taking walks over the river, watching the man-sized, razor-toothed fish trying to strike at them from below. Unfortunately, the frenzied fish often possess more strength than expected, and even the grating has not proven invulnerable to their vicious attacks — many Inmates have died in this way, but the Orderlies are quick to repair any damage to the grates.

There is much less greenery in the Ward than there once was, naturally, and so the wind coming in off the Lake is much fiercer now, and howls constantly. The wind also drops the temperature in the Ward by as much as thirty degrees, and sometimes even more in the dead of winter, making IllWard one of the only Wards to ever experience genuinely cold weather — on the most frigid of days, the constant moisture even turns to ice, coating most surfaces and making everyone except the Gliders dread the treacherous footing.



The El, the elevated train tracks that give the Loop its name, are kept in good repair. These tracks were part of Chicago's public transit system, and were completely separate from the tracks used by the Illinois Central Railroad, which run up from the northern border of Fields, cut along the lake shore through Lunatic territory, and stop at Union Station (now part of Offices). In an engineering feat remarkable for the era just after the Wars, the Orderlies constructed their own track from Union Station up to

ASYLUM
THE SEED

the El, so that the internal supply train could run straight from Offices, and all of the loading and unloading of supplies could take place safely within Orderly-controlled territory. When the supply trains aren't running, the El retains some of its original function as a means of transportation — it is the main hub of IllWard's Beltway.

Street Map

Key Locations

Sears Tower and Union Station: These two immense structures (formerly the headquarters for a major retail chain and a national railway hub, respectively) have been combined to form Offices, thus providing both superior height and unassailable strength in one building. The street between them has been closed off and walled in. Union Station is used solely for the loading and unloading of supply trains, and is heavily patrolled. Sears Tower is one of the only buildings in IllWard that is fully operational. There are rumors that a tunnel exists linking the Tower to the remnants of O'Hare Airport, which is far outside of IllWard, but these rumors have never been confirmed, and what purpose this tunnel might serve is unknown.

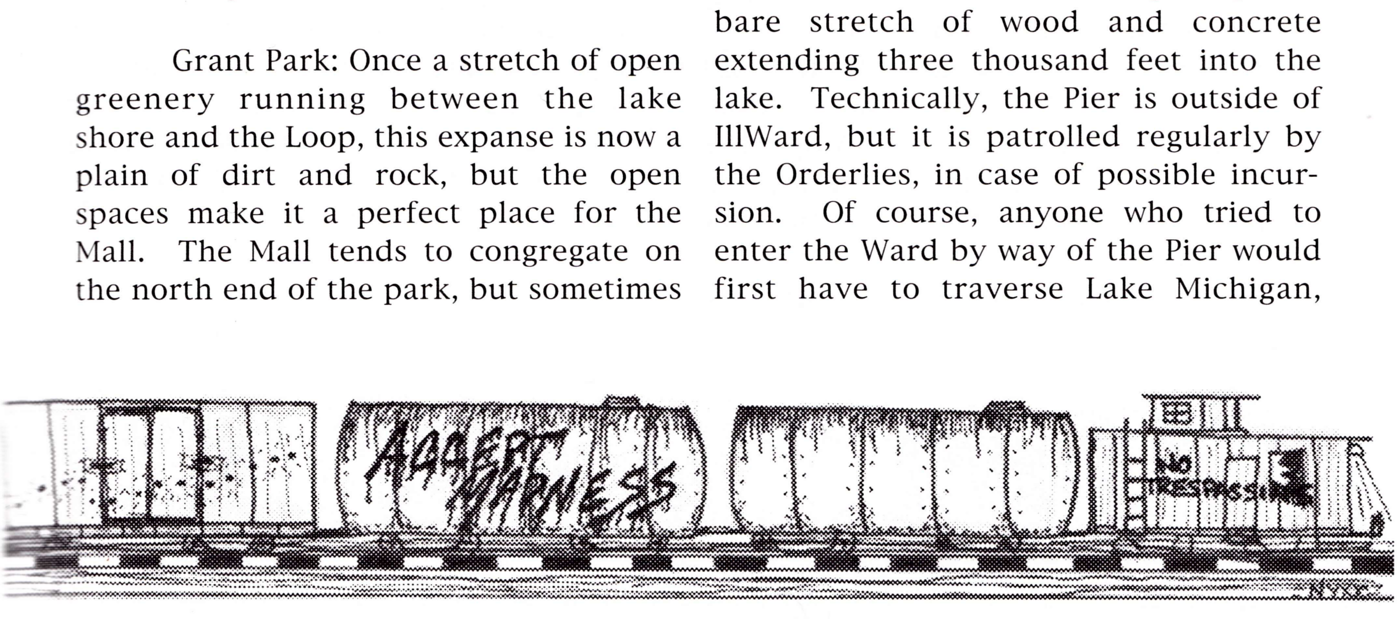
Grant Park: Once a stretch of open greenery running between the lake shore and the Loop, this expanse is now a plain of dirt and rock, but the open spaces make it a perfect place for the Mall. The Mall tends to congregate on the north end of the park, but sometimes you can find less reputable dealers at the south end by the old Aquarium and Museum of Natural History.

McCormick Place: Once a huge downtown convention center, this building now serves as the Lounge. Its floor-to-ceiling windows of tinted glass make for a soothing environment inside, but there is much more space in the building than the Lounge and the Sharks' Den requires, and therefore many Inmates have taken up residence, especially those who are too demented to function outside any longer.

Hancock Tower: This tower, second in height to Sears Tower (1100 ft. to the Sears Tower's monumental 1400), is home to the Rulers.

Soldier Field: Once the stadium for the Chicago Bears, this structure was designed to look like an ancient Greek forum, complete with columns and colonnades. It now serves as the home of both the Alchemists and the Forum, and the two groups hotly contest the limited territory within it.

Navy Pier: While this pier once was the home of many upscale restaurants and shops, all of these structures have been torn down, leaving the pier a bare stretch of wood and concrete extending three thousand feet into the lake. Technically, the Pier is outside of IllWard, but it is patrolled regularly by the Orderlies, in case of possible incursion. Of course, anyone who tried to enter the Ward by way of the Pier would first have to traverse Lake Michigan,



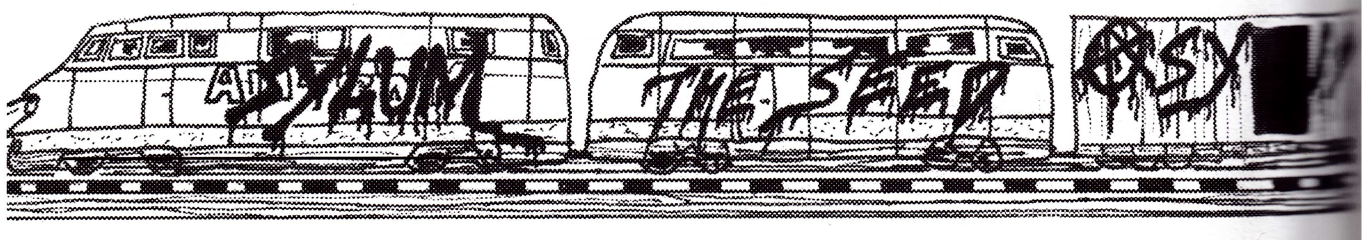
which would mean confronting the monstrous fish that reside there. Indeed, Orderlies who are in particularly ill favor are sometimes required to fish off the Pier, supposedly in an attempt to supplement the Ward's food supply — in reality, although the lines do regularly draw interested fish, it is usually the fish who departs with the delicacy of fresh food rather than the hapless Orderlies. The Pier is also used as Dead End — bodies are unceremoniously dumped into the water, providing yet another treat for the fish.

The Loop: The elevated train tracks running in a circle through the heart of what was once downtown Chicago, and is now the heart of IllWard. The tracks are still fairly sturdy, and stand two stories above street level. This is the widest and most heavily traveled portion of the Beltway, and is controlled by the Gliders.

Water Tower Place: Although everything of value was looted from this building years ago, Water Tower Place remains the home of the Ward's Shallow People. The bottom seven floors once served as a luxury mall, and are used now as a place for the Shallow People to congregate and be shallow. They live in the rest of the building — originally a five-star hotel and million-dollar condominiums — and there is enough room for each Inmate to control several rooms or even an entire floor, depending on his or her status. Status also dictates how high up in the tower an Inmate lives, but because of the nature of the Shallow People and their perpetual competition with one another, they are constantly changing rooms with one another. Another sign of status among the Shallow People of IllWard is the Museum of Style, which they have set up along the three-story escalator (no longer functional) in the main lobby of the mall. Here, the Shallow People have set up all of the mannequins they have rescued, both from the old Water Tower Mall shops and elsewhere in the Ward. It is considered to be the highest honor to be allowed to redress one of the mannequins in an outfit of your own design.

The Chicago Board of Trade: Formerly a trading center for the commodities market, this forty-four story building is almost completely uninhabitable, but a group of Inmates has preserved the large pits where the active trading once took place. Each day these Inmates still gather in the pits to stand and scream at one other, for no reason that any of them can remember.

Merrill C. Meigs Airport: This small private airport on the shore of Lake Michigan is now the home of the Gliders, where they go whenever they are not out patrolling the Loop. Naturally, there are no working planes at the Airport anymore, but the rusted hulks still litter the field, and far from removing them, the Gliders delight in navigating past these obstacles at top speed. They live in the abandoned hangars and other buildings, and rumor has it that the leader of the Gliders lives in the control tower itself.



Other Attractions

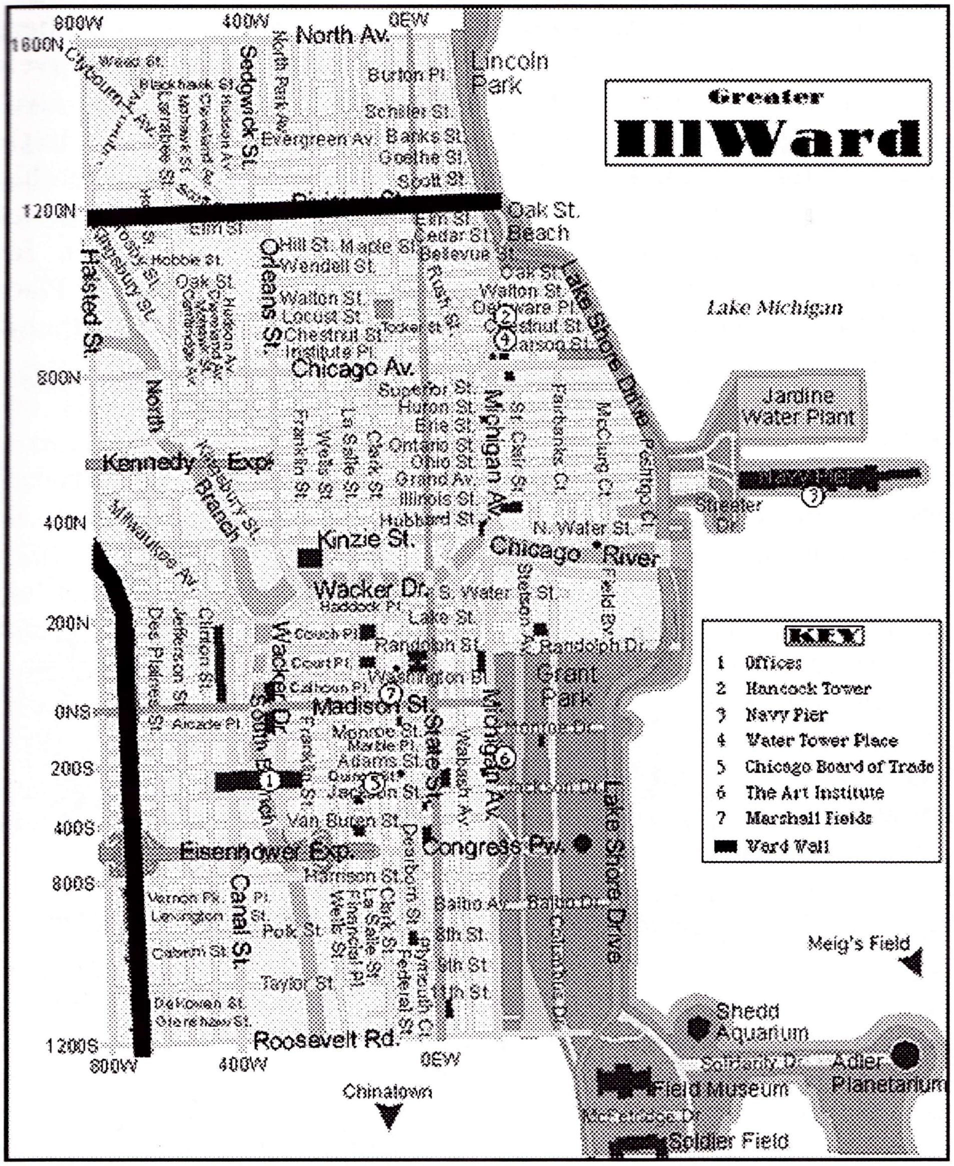
This is a list of some of the other major buildings in IllWard, deliberately left undetailed so that each GM can use, alter, and populate them as they see fit.

The Field Museum of Natural History: As with the Adler Planetarium and the Shedd Aquarium, this museum sits at the south end of Grant Park, just north of Soldier Field. The museum features several odd exhibits, including the four-story-high skeleton of a brachiosaurus in the central atrium, a series of plaster-and-wood dioramas depicting the different ages and epochs of Earth's natural history, and a Maori tribal meeting house.

The Adler Planetarium: This museum features three floors of exhibits, as well as a planetarium in the Zeiss Theater.

The Shedd Aquarium: There are more than two hundred smaller exhibits here, as well as three larger ones: a Coral Reef, an Arctic exhibit, and the Oceanarium (which featured dolphins and beluga whales). Of course, all of the marine life is probably dead now — unless it mutated . . .

The Chicago Art Institute: A huge neo-classical structure on the east side of Michigan Avenue at Adams Street, just east of the Loop. The


Greater
IllWard
Lake Michigan
North Av.
Lincoln Park
Oak St. Beach
Chicago Av.
Michigan Av.
Lake Shore Drive
Jardine Water Plant
Navy Pier
Kennedy Exp.
Kinzie St.
Chicago River
Wacker Dr.
Madison St.
State St.
Grant Park
Congress Pw.
Eisenhower Exp.
Canal St.
Roosevelt Rd.
Meig's Field
Shedd Aquarium
Adler Planetarium
Field Museum
Soldier Field
Chinatown
800W
400W
0EW
1600N
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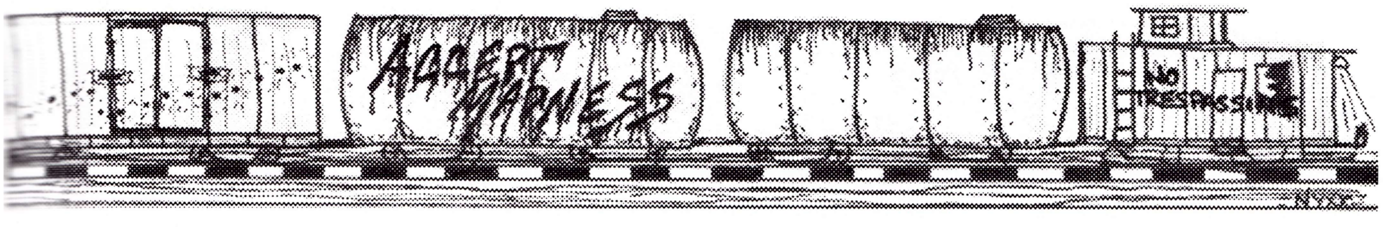
KEY
1 Offices
2 Hancock Tower
3 Navy Pier
4 Water Tower Place
5 Chicago Board of Trade
6 The Art Institute
7 Marshall Fields
Ward Wall


NO TRESPASSING

front door is guarded by two huge stone lions. Many world masterpieces are on display here, including Grant Wood's "American Gothic" and Georges Seurat's "Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grand Jatte."

Marshall Fields: An architectural marvel, featuring world-famous wrought iron facades, Marshall Fields is one of the largest department stores in the country — several stories high and taking up two separate city blocks in the heart of the area known as the Loop (because of its most prominent feature). The two halves of the store are connected across Wabash Avenue by a walkway on the second floor of each building.

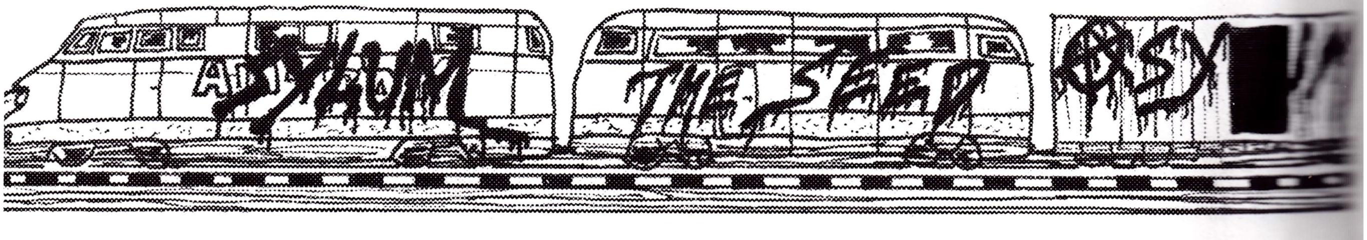
Palmer House: Built in the mid-1920's, the Palmer is one of the grand old luxury hotels from Chicago's colorful past. The lobby features rich carpeting, patterned marble floors, antique lighting fixtures, and ceiling murals. The twenty-three story hotel is located right in the center of the Loop.

The Magnificent Mile: The section of Michigan Avenue running from Water Tower Place (the home of IllWard's Shallow People) to the Chicago River, famous for its big-name department stores (Saks Fifth Avenue, Henri Bendel, Neiman Marcus), boutiques, restaurants (including Pizzeria Uno's — home of the original deep-dish pizza), art galleries, and luxury hotels.

Lower Wacker Drive: In the section of downtown between the Loop and the Magnificent Mile, right where the river cuts through the city, the streets become two-level: a lower street, and then another street running directly above it at what is considered to be "street level." Wacker Drive, along the south shore of the river just north of the Loop, and Michigan Avenue where it crosses the Chicago River, are the two main streets in this configuration. The lower streets are always in shadow and desolate. There are safe havens here, though, including the Billy Goat Tavern (immortalized by *Saturday Night Live*'s Not Ready For Prime Time Players in the "Cheeseburger, cheeseburger" sketch).

The Hard Rock Café: Located west of Michigan Avenue and just a few blocks southwest of Water Tower Place, this restaurant serves '50's-style (that is, greasy) hamburgers and is decorated with rock memorabilia.

Major Forces

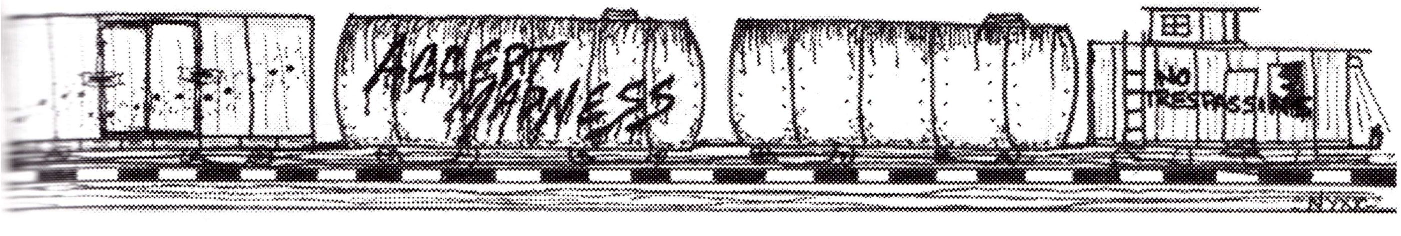


Gliders: This is a band of skate fiends who control the Loop and live at Miegs Airport — they are mostly Manic, and never slow down or take off their skates. Life to them is all about speed, and they are constantly competing to be the fastest, both by exercising fanatically and by perpetually trying to update their skates. They are not actually particularly dangerous or even confrontational, unless you happen to be slow and in their way — then they will simply shove you out of the way, and if you make a fuss they and their friends will spin circles around you and eventually trample you underfoot.

Rulers: Compulsives and Anal-Retentives who have a very strong, very tightly controlled gang and who, years ago, claimed the Hancock Tower as their stronghold. The Warden sent the Orderlies out to clear the place, because he didn't like having any Inmates in control of a building as tall as Offices, but the Rulers repulsed the attack and have held the building ever since. One of its most attractive features is that it is near enough to the Perimeter and high enough that people can escape from it if they choose, by parachute or hang glider or similar conveyance.

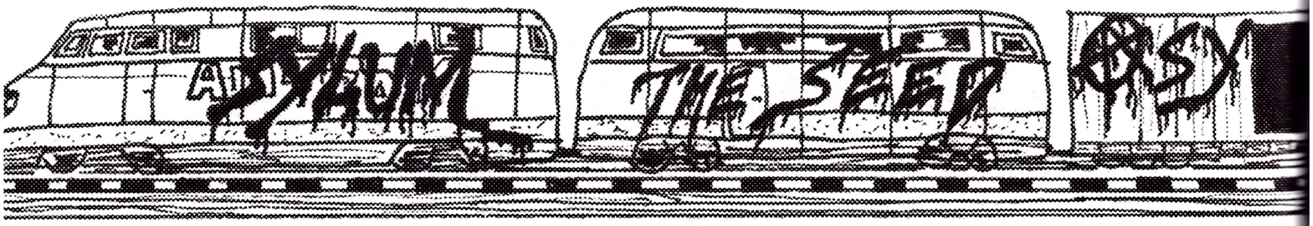
Alchemists: This is a group made primarily of Monomaniacs and Psychotics, with some Sociopaths as well. They follow the teachings of Aristotle and believe themselves to be traditional philosopher-kings, best suited to rule by virtue of superior intelligence. The ability to reason and to debate is valued highly, but so is the ability to separate emotion from logic — to be cold and uncaring when circumstances require. They have also read Machiavelli's *The Prince* and hold to its principles: that fear is stronger than love and that a good ruler is a stern and unforgiving one. The Psychotics in the group actually believe themselves to be back in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome — some may even think that they are Aristotle or perhaps Socrates or Plato. The Alchemists have worthy motives — to provide the best government possible, to improve living conditions in the Ward, and to improve the quality of everyone's mind. Unfortunately, they are willing to use any means to accomplish those ends.

The Forum: This group, like the Alchemists, patterns itself on ancient history in general and ancient Greece and Rome in particular. However, unlike their rivals, the members of the Forum do not see themselves as philosopher-kings. Rather, they believe they are honest men and women who represent the other Inmates, and they attempt to control through reason and open debate. Most of the Forum members are Honest, and many are either Obsessive (about logic, honor, reason, other traditional Roman Senatorial values), Psychotic (believing they really are Roman Senators), or occasionally Sociopathic (feeling that the society must prosper, even at the cost of the individual). In many ways they are very much like their rivals, the Alchemists, which is part of the reason for the rivalry — however, members of the Forum see themselves as only pieces of a larger unit and



always work towards the best interests of the group, while the Alchemists are more individualistic and each member believes that he or she has the right to choose what is best for everyone.

Lunatics: The Lunatics of IllWard are far more numerous, more organized, and more comfortable than in most places. The supply train from Fields passes overland and through Lunatic territory, so several decades ago one clever Lunatic led a daring raid and actually seized control of the train. She held it until the Warden was forced to negotiate with her — the Lunatics agreed to allow the train through unmolested, in return for regular shipments of clothing and food (there is always a surplus sent to each Ward). So, in Ill-Ward, the Fringe is more like a suburban section of the Ward than an actual excluded section — there are places where the walls have been broken down, and the Lunatics patrol these breaks themselves, in return for unrestricted access into the Ward itself for trade and socialization purposes.



Section 7

Episodes

Episode One: Playing Solitaire

The Orderlies patrol the Ward, and usually they break up major fights and maintain at least some semblance of peace. Unfortunately, they also tend to lord it over the Inmates, and sometimes when they are bored or irritable Orderlies have been known to vent their frustrations on Inmates, whether the people in question had anything to do with the problem or not. But when an Orderly is feeling extremely sadistic, or when an Inmate has been making a clear nuisance of him- or herself, then the Orderlies take their victim back to the House of Solitude. Very few of those who are brought there return, and the ones who do are usually reduced to gibbering and drooling.

So when the Orderlies grab a friend of the characters, a Scribe named Widen, and cart him off to the House, they know that they can't simply leave him there. Sure, Widen had his problems too, but no one deserves that sort of punishment, and they're determined to save him. Somehow.

Possibilities for the group include: causing enough trouble to get sent to the House themselves and then trying to get free and rescue Widen from the inside, mobilizing enough Inmates to assault the House and try to rescue him, or leaving the Ward and trying to find outside help to bring back and crack the place.

Once inside, the problem is how to find Widen, free him, and get back out with him, all the while avoiding both the Orderlies who patrol the place and the Staff who work (and play!) there. There are also other Inmates in the House, some of whom are given free run of the place, and they can be both a help and a danger in and of themselves.

Timetable

(Here is what will happen unless the characters affect events)

Wednesday: Widen is captured by the Orderlies and taken to the House

Thursday: He is rested and fed and then given a physical

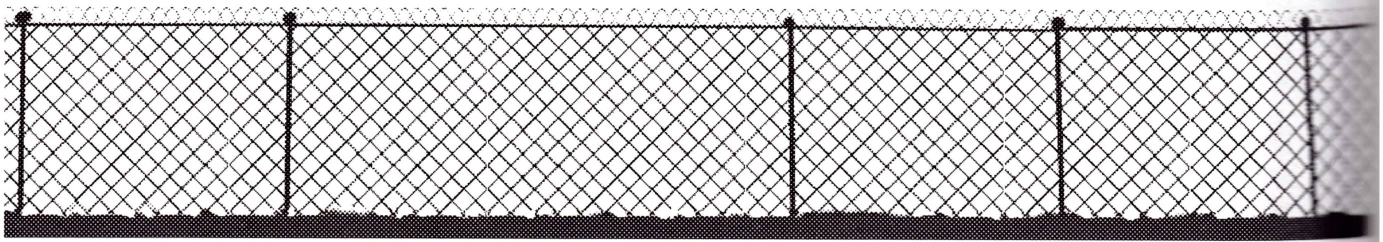
Friday: Tests begin on him, in the labs (just preliminary check-ups).

Sunday: After studying hand-eye coordination and motor functions, the Shrink puts out Widen's eyes to see how he will compensate.

Tuesday: The inner ear is tampered with, removing all sense of balance. Simultaneously, several Inmates in the Tank organize a revolt and attempt to escape. A handful actually make it out into the cells and the studies via the platform (see below). They are shot down by the Orderlies, their bodies tossed back into the Tank as examples, and security is tightened.

Thursday: With his tests finished, the Shrink sends what is left of Widen to the Tank.

Monday: Widen dies from a combination of battery, blood loss, fatigue, and starvation.

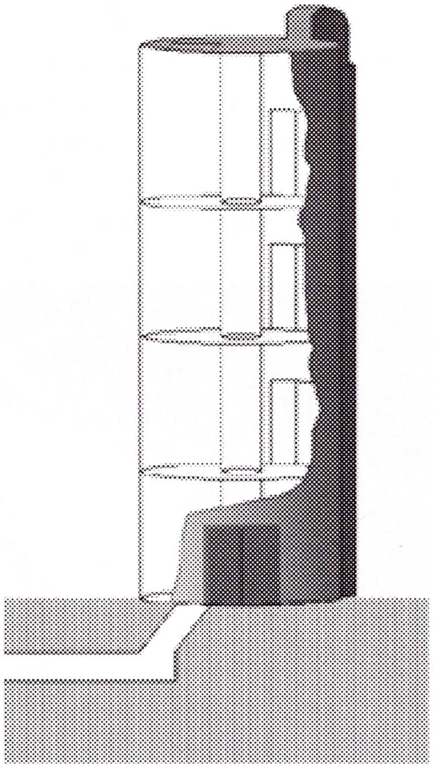


Layout: The House is essentially a tower, within Offices' walls but standing separate from the other buildings in the compound. There are no windows at all, and the only doors are at the base of the House — and at the very top, where crazed Inmates occasionally emerge and then throw themselves to their doom.

There is another entrance as well, although non-Staff are not aware of it — a narrow underground passage leads from Offices to the House, so that Staff can pass back and forth more easily.

Inside, the House is broken down into four areas: the labs, the studies, the cells, and the Tank. A circular metal staircase cuts through the center of each, shielded by a strong metal wall around it and entered in each case through heavy iron doors. There is also a moving platform, basically a simplistic elevator without sides or roof, in one corner that is used to lift and lower both equipment and Inmates who are no longer capable of handling the stairs — it is large enough to fit four men and a hospital stretcher, and is separated from the rest of the floor by the a pair of the same metal doors.

The bottom floors house the labs, where the Shrinks perform their experiments on hapless Inmates, prodding and injecting and altering them for fun and "in the interests of science." Labs are long, narrow rooms with fluorescent lights and slippery tiled floors, and are usually cluttered with desks, examining tables, chairs, wires, monitors, and other equipment. They have swinging double doors, in order to wheel equipment — and victims — in and out more easily.



Above the labs are the studies — small closets where the Shrinks can go and ponder their projects, discuss findings, and determine new techniques. Each study has a desk, several chairs, an overhead light, and a blackboard. There are speaking tubes built into the walls that connect each study with the lab below it, so that the Shrink can keep track of a subject left below and can relay orders to any Nurses left down there.

The cells contain captured Inmates, one per tiny room. Each cell is round, with no windows and featureless walls, so that only the hard metal doors offer any relief from the monotony. There is no furniture other than a hole for waste and a spigot above it for washing (this is controlled from outside, however, and is usually only turned on for a few seconds at a time, at random intervals). A grate in the base of the door is lifted to slide food trays in and out. The cells are almost completely soundproofed.

The top floor contains the Tank, where Inmates are sent after the Shrinks are done with them — a rare few are actually released, either as a further experiment or from some momentary glimmer of compassion (or perhaps due to overcrowding). The Tank is a single large round room with nothing but the

same spigot-and-hole combination and a trapdoor up above leading to the summit of the tower. Anarchy prevails within, as the inhabitants fight for food (when it is provided), water, and a chance to try and reach the trapdoor and escape from the madness.

Security: There is an Orderly stationed next to the stairwell on each of the lower floors — it is unsafe to leave one in the Tank. Two other Orderlies patrol the House, moving from floor to floor and accompanying Inmates and Shrinks. Every two hours, the two on patrol switch with two of the ones on stairwell-duty, so that no one is left in the same spot for more than four hours. Inmates are escorted from door to door by a Nurse and an Orderly, and when in the labs they are strapped down. The keys to the cells are held by the Orderly on duty. Several Shrinks have their own set of keys as well.

The doors to the platform are locked, and the key is held by the Orderly stationed on each floor. The door that lets out onto the Tank can only be unlocked from the platform side.

NPCs:

Widen

Attitude	Reminiscent
Occupation	Scribe
Disorder	Autistic
Aberrations	Kleptomania (Advanced) Manic (Early)
Lucidity	4
Fluidity	1
Aura	3
Zeal	1
Movement	2/1/-
Resistance	15/3/5/2/4

Skills

Sleight-of-Hand	2
Academia	4
Literacy	3
Science	1
Electronics	3
Medicine	2

Widen used to be a very talkative, very personable man, and you liked to spend time with him, tagging along on his searches for old books and relics and then listening to him recount tales of the pre-disaster days. Over the last few years, however, he has become more and more withdrawn, a mere shadow of his former self, until now he spends most of his time staring off into space, absently biting his nails. When he does snap out of his trance, Widen tends to become very animated again, launching into a rapid flow of conversation and narrative. Such spells never last long. You feel protective towards him, however, because of the bond you once shared, and you help him out by bringing him his food and leading him out on walks every few days. Widen is only average height, and now he is rail-thin, his graying hair floating loosely around his head and leaving wide expanses of bare scalp, and his pale blue eyes are rarely focused.

Dr. Noyle

Attitude	Headliner
Disorder	Sociopath
Aberrations	Monomania (Advanced) Exhibitionist (Early)

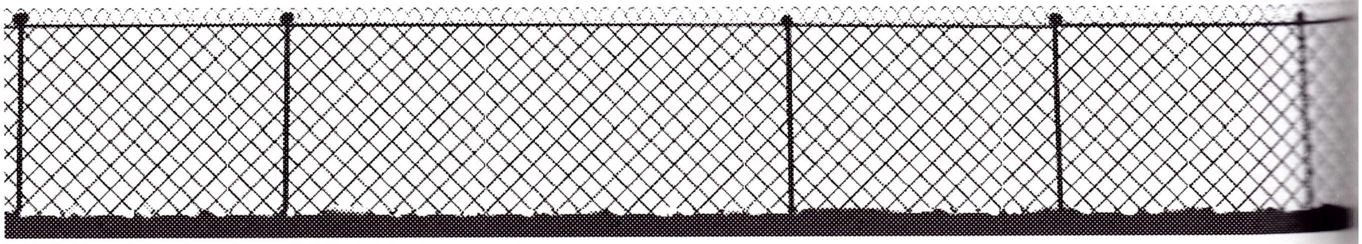
Lucidity	4
Fluidity	3
Aura	1
Zeal	2
Movement	4/2/-
Resistance	30/6/10/4/8
Skills	
Melee Combat	1
Climbing	2
Awareness	2
Psychoanalysis	2
Science (Biology)	3
Medicine	5
Sewing	1

Dr. Noyle is the Shrink who claims your friend for experimentation — he is studying the senses and the way Inmates use, rely on, and compensate for them. He is average height, stout, with graying brown curls and wide, rough features. He likes to talk and to hear his own voice, and he is convinced that he is adding significantly to the fund of human knowledge.

Bahmer	
Attitude	Bully
Disorder	Paranoid
Aberrations	Kleptomaniac (Advanced) Depressive (Advanced)
Lucidity	1
Fluidity	4
Aura	1
Zeal	3
Movement	6/3/-
Resistance	45/9/15/6/12
Skills	
Hand-to-Hand	2
Stealth	2
Sleight-of-Hand	3
Awareness	1
Gambling	2
Medicine	1

Bahmer is a Nurse who works exclusively with the Shrinks in the House — the reason for this is because he is too unstable to be allowed near real patients anymore. He is convinced that everyone else thinks he is worthless and wants to kill him, and he tries to make up for it by bullying others and by stockpiling potentially valuable items to trade for his life later. Bahmer is a little below average height with short arms and stubby hands, and his face seems too small for his square head, so that the features are shoved in too closely together. He has no hair.

Merrill	
Attitude	Recluse
Disorder	Autistic DID
Aberrations	Passive-Aggressive (Early)
Lucidity	2
Fluidity	1
Aura	2
Zeal	2
Movement	4/2/-
Resistance	30/6/10/4/8
Skills	
Acrobatics	1
Sleight-of-Hand (as “Bob the Flute”)	3
Gambling	2
Music	2
Psychoanalysis	2
Medicine (only as “Dr. Quon”)	3



Plumbing 1

Merrill is one of the only Inmates who is known to have been released from the House while still alive. He is missing both of his thumbs, has no teeth and no finger- or toenails, and spends most of his days squatting before the screen in the Lounge or huddling in the corner of an old carpet store, amidst tattered fabric remnants. His niece Justine takes care of him, bringing him food and keeping strangers away from him.

Merrill spends most of his time locked away in his own head, but if you can coax him out — and some of his personalities are more talkative than others — he can give you an idea of what the House is like, in terms of layout and guards. He stutters constantly, and his thin chest wheezes with every breath.

Episode Two: Running the Ward

The Alchemists, a strident group of Monomaniacs who already hold a section of the Ward, decide to take over the entire Ward. They are rallying people to them, offering better conditions once they are in power, and anyone not with them is against them and sorely punished. The characters don't agree with them, necessarily, but even if they feel strongly enough about it to try and defeat the Alchemists they could never manage it alone. The rival group, the Forum, rises up to stop the Alchemists, knowing that if they win they themselves could try to take over. Meanwhile, the Orderlies are trying to stop the attempted coup, and are shaking down their Inmate contacts, while also beating on anyone they suspect of involvement.

Possibilities for the group include: joining the Alchemists in order to destroy them from within, joining the Forum to fight the Alchemists, escaping the Ward to look for allies to defeat the Alchemists (there are Lunatics outside the walls, and a segment of the Factors a few days away), trying to hide from the Alchemists and remaining neutral, offering your services to both the Alchemists and the Forum (and perhaps even the Orderlies) and trying to play them off against each other.

Timetable

(Here is what will happen unless the

characters affect events)

Saturday (the 1st): The Alchemists begin to sound people out on where they stand in the upcoming conflict.

Sunday: The Alchemists hold a rally to raise support — they exhort people to storm Offices and "overthrow the tyrants!"

Monday: The Alchemists attack the Pitons, defeat them, and claim the Beltway. They demand that all Inmates either pledge to aid them, agree to stay out of the way, or leave the Ward immediately.

Tuesday: The Alchemists overrun the supply train, hand out the supplies themselves, and send several people back in the train to try and sneak into Offices. The attack fails, and the people are executed.

Wednesday: The supply train has a full squad of Orderlies onboard.

Thursday: The Alchemists try to sneak into Offices by pretending to be sick and in need of Clinical aid — they are captured and thrown into the House of Solitude.

Friday: The Alchemists approach the Forum with a proposed alliance — the Alchemist leader, Alfonse, defeats the Forum leader, Stillwater, in a debate, and the Forum agrees to aid them.

Saturday (the 8th): A group from the Forum attacks the supply train at 11 am. Orderlies rush to defend it, and the Alchemists use the confusion to try and storm Offices. They get a few people inside before they are repelled.

Sunday: The remaining Alchemists and the Forum hold a second rally and incite frenzy in their audience. At a prearranged time the Alchemists who made it into Offices fight their way to the main gate and throw it open from the inside — the mob streams in. Offices is overrun, and Staff retreat back to the House of Solitude.

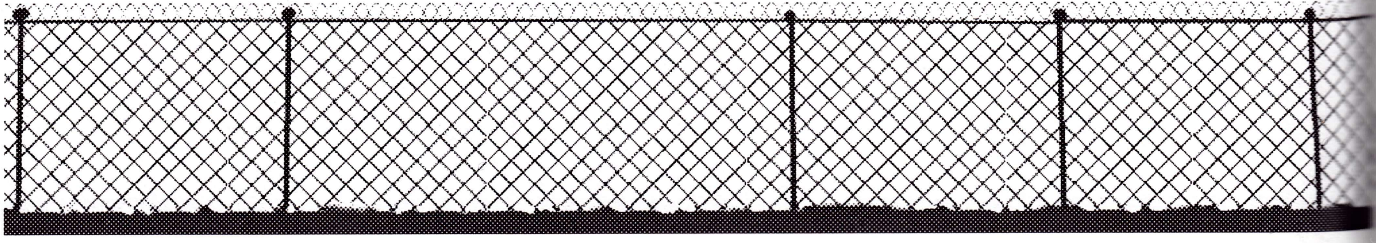
Monday: The House is sieged, and Alfonse takes control of Offices.

Tuesday: The supply trains are manned by Alchemists, and they announce their new control of the Ward.

Wednesday: Alfonse holds a public demonstration — he executes the Warden and offers the other Staff a choice — agree to serve him or die. Most, starved and demoralized, agree.

Thursday: The Alchemists begin to round up those Inmates who stood against them and throw them in the House.

Friday: The Alchemists move on to



the Inmates who didn't help them, and throw them in the House as well.

Saturday (the 15th): They throw the Forum members in as well, because it is too dangerous to keep them around.

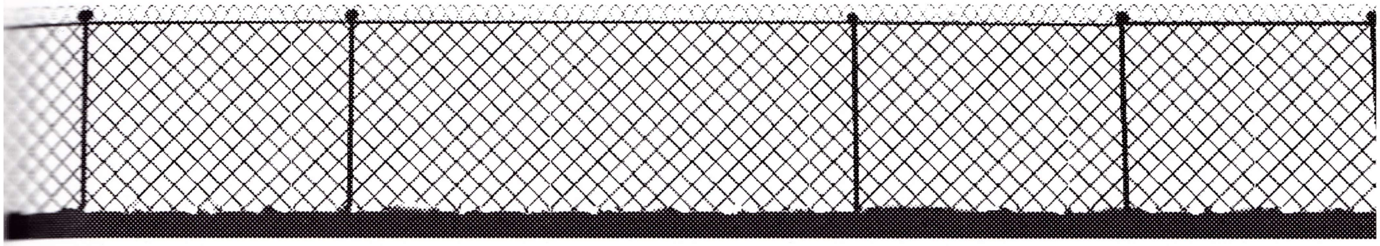
Monday: Eleusis, Alfonse's second-in-command, goes completely Psychotic and tries to wrest control from Alfonse. War breaks out among the Alchemists.

Wednesday: Finding himself to be losing, Alfonse releases the surviving Forum members and enlists their aid. They turn on him instead, kill him, and then go after Eleusis. The Ward is in complete and utter chaos, and people are dying everywhere.

The Alchemists: This is a group made primarily of Monomaniacs and Psychotics, with some Sociopaths as well. They follow the teachings of Aristotle and believe themselves to be traditional philosopher-kings, best suited to rule by virtue of superior intelligence. The ability to reason and to debate is valued highly, but so is the ability to separate emotion from logic — to be cold and uncaring when circumstances require. They have also read Machiavelli's *The Prince* and hold to its principles: that fear is stronger than love and that a good ruler is a stern and unforgiving one. The Psychotics in the group actually believe themselves to be back in Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome — some may even think that they are Aristotle or perhaps Socrates or Plato. The Alchemists have worthy motives — to provide the best government possible, to improve living conditions in the Ward, and to improve the quality of everyone's mind. Unfortunately, they are willing to use any means to accomplish those ends.

The Pitons: This inner-Ward group spends most of its time scaling the walls of buildings, stringing ropes and pulleys and networking structures together. They rule the Beltway absolutely, for the simple reason that no one else can match their agility and confidence on the treacherous walkways. Beyond that, they don't concern themselves much with the rest of the Ward — anyone is free to use the Beltways as long as they acknowledge Piton rule and obey their directions.

The Forum: This group, like the Alchemists, patterns itself on ancient history in general and ancient Greece and Rome in particular. However, unlike their rivals, the members of the Forum do not see themselves as philosopher-kings. Rather, they believe they are honest men and women who represent the other Inmates, and they attempt to control their section of the Ward through reason and open debate. Most of the Forum members are Honest, and many are either Obsessive (about logic, honor, reason, other traditional Roman Senatorial values), Psychotic (believing they really are Roman Senators), or occasionally Sociopathic (feeling that the society must prosper, even at the cost



of the individual). In many ways they are very much like their rivals, the Alchemists, which is part of the reason for the rivalry — however, members of the Forum see themselves as only pieces of a larger unit and always work towards the best interests of the group, while the Alchemists are more individualistic and each member believes that he or she has the right to choose what is best for everyone.

The Lunatics: The Lunatics outside this Ward are, if no better dressed or bathed, certainly better fed, armed, and organized than usual. This is primarily due to their leader, Piesan, who works tirelessly to keep his brethren fed and relatively peaceful. As such, they are a good deal harder to incite than most Inmates, and it would take a very good reason, explained very clearly, to sway Piesan into assisting in anything that might interfere with the group's current lifestyle. Similarly, he has no reason to help in anything that will not affect them. The Lunatics will shelter and feed any Inmates who manage to make it outside the walls, but only for a few days and only as long as no one strong enough to pose a threat (such as the Orderlies, or the Alchemists) comes looking for the escapees.

The Factors: There is a small group of Factors near the Ward — they circle the place, just outside the range of the Lunatics' guns, and attempt to raid the supply trains whenever they pass. This particular group of Factors delights in causing trouble, and whenever they can they sneak close enough to the Ward to fire primitive missiles (rubble-filled cannons, catapults) at the walls, taunt the Guards, and shout at the Inmates. The Lunatics hate them, but even though they outnumber the Factors they cannot match their vehicles or their firepower — the Factors know this and often attack the Lunatics, but the scavengers' tenacity has won a grudging respect, and such raids are often costly. The Factors would welcome any chance to get inside the Ward itself, and they would gladly help Inmates in trouble, as long as there is something in it for them — their preferred coin is trouble for the Warden and Staff.

Alfonse
Leader of the Alchemists

Attitude	Ponderer
Disorder	Sociopath Paranoid
Aberrations	Monomania (Advanced)

Lucidity	5
Fluidity	3
Aura	4
Zeal	2
Movement	4/2/-
Resistance	30/6/10/4/8

Skills

Hand-to-Hand Combat	2
Firearms	2
Academia (Philosophy)	3
Art	4
Literacy	3
Psychoanalysis	2
Medicine	3

Alfonse is a very calm, very intelligent man, very sure of himself and his own abilities and determined to achieve his goals by whatever means necessary. He does believe that there are those who are out to usurp his position, as well as others who wish to shatter his power and his organization, but all this does is cause him to assess each situation and each individual very carefully — he never lets anger control him, nor does he ever back himself into a corner. The Alchemists are his family, his home, both his tool and his protection, and all of Alfonse's own plans revolve around them.

Eleusis
Alchemist, Alfonse's second-in-command

Attitude	Pragmatist
Disorder	Bipolar
Aberrations	Psychotic (Extreme) Homicidal (Early) Paranoid (Early)
Lucidity	3
Fluidity	4
Aura	2
Zeal	4
Movement	8/4/-
Resistance	60/12/20/8/16

Skills

Climbing	1
Hand-to-Hand Combat	3
Melee Combat	2
Firearms	3
Academia (Philosophy)	1
Literacy	2
Music	1
Toolsmithing	2

Eleusis is one of the Alchemists who genuinely believes that he is in the Age of Greece — at least, part of the time. He also has violent mood swings, believes that there are people who are out to get him, and occasionally wants to kill people for no reason. Eleusis is a good counterpart to Alfonse because he is violent and direct and realistic, where his leader is calm and subtle and idealistic, but those same differences cause the two men to come into conflict frequently. Alfonse maintains control, but it is no secret that Eleusis resents that fact, and may at some point seek to correct the matter.

Grapple
Leader of the Pitons

Attitude	Bully
Disorder	Manic
Aberrations	Exhibitionist (Advanced) Compulsive (Early)
Lucidity	2
Fluidity	4
Aura	2
Zeal	5

Movement	10/5/-
Resistance	75/15/25/10/20

Skills

Acrobatics	3
Climbing	4
Hand-to-Hand Combat	2
Melee Combat	4
Awareness	3
Gambling	1
Carpentry	1
Sewing	2

Grapple is the perfect leader for the Pitons, because he is energetic, acrobatic, strong enough to make others obey him, and demanding enough to keep them so busy that they can't stop to question his authority. Under his guidance, the Pitons went from a small group of Inmates who enjoyed climbing to a well-honed, fully unified gang who rule the Beltway, and Grapple makes sure his fellows never forget that he is the one responsible for their success. His favorite activity is to challenge someone to duel while navigating the trickier portions of the Beltway, knives only, and slowly shred them in front of witnesses. He never uses guns because they have recoil, and when you're swinging on a line that can be deadly.

Stillwater

Leader of the Forum

Attitude	Pragmatist
Disorder	Obsessive
Aberrations	Exhibitionist (Early) Anal-Retentive (Early) Honest (Extreme)
Lucidity	4
Fluidity	4
Aura	3
Zeal	2
Movement	4/2/-
Resistance	30/6/10/4/8

Skills

Melee Combat	1
Stealth	2
Academia	3
Literacy	4
Art	2
Music	1
Carpentry	2

Stillwater is a reasonable man, and in his role as leader of the Forum his only obsession, for unfailing honesty in all things, is more of an asset than a liability. He is of average height, slender of build, and very solemn of expression. He never raises his voice, and although he enjoys attention he is more interested in respect for his actions and attention to his words than in emotional or active responses to loud words or violent gestures.

Lehman

Orderly Squad Leader

Attitude	Team Player
Disorder	Obsessive
Aberrations	Dependent (Advanced)
Lucidity	2
Fluidity	4
Aura	3
Zeal	4
Movement	8/4/-
Resistance	60/12/20/8/16

Skills

Climbing	1
Hand-to-Hand Combat	3
Firearms	4
Awareness	2
Gambling	2
Literacy	1
Electronics	3

Lehman is a fairly typical Squad leader, in that his major concern in life is his Squad, its well-being, and its activities. However, in Lehman's case that is carried to unhealthy extremes — he thinks of nothing else, day or night, and is so attached to his Squad that he has to be near at least one other member at all times. Although the men in his command think this a little odd, they do have to admit that their leader is totally committed to them, and there is a sense of security in knowing that he is never far away. Because of this, Lehman's Squad is one of the most effective, and the most feared, in all the Ward.

Piesan
Chief Lunatic

Attitude	Pragmatist
Disorder	Manic
Aberrations	Honest (Advanced)
Lucidity	4
Fluidity	2
Aura	3
Zeal	4
Movement	8/4/-
Resistance	60/12/20/8/16

Skills

Climbing	3
Hand-to-Hand Combat	2
Melee Combat	3
Awareness	2
Psychoanalysis	2
Medicine	2
Carpentry	1

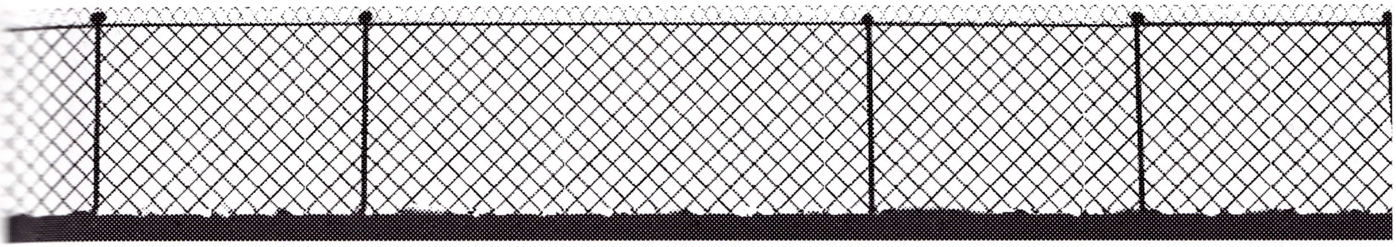
Piesan is a rarity among the Lunatics. Not only does he have a clear mind and a good sense of what is necessary, but he also possesses an abundance of personal energy — so much so that, even after a long day of eking out a living beyond the walls, he still has the strength to direct the actions of the community, defuse disputes, and plan for the future. Piesan's one failing is that he is too honest for his own good, being virtually incapable of lessening the blow of bad news. But the Lunatics respect him nonetheless, and have complete trust in whatever he tells them.

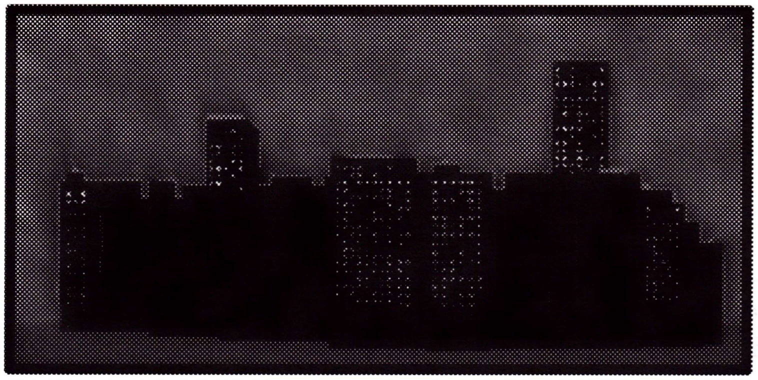
the Aardvark
Local Factor Leader

Attitude	Bully
Disorder	Paranoid
Aberrations	Obsessive (advanced) Homicidal (advanced) Pathological Liar (early)
Lucidity	2
Fluidity	4
Aura	1
Zeal	4
Movement	6/3/-
Resistance	45/9/15/6/12

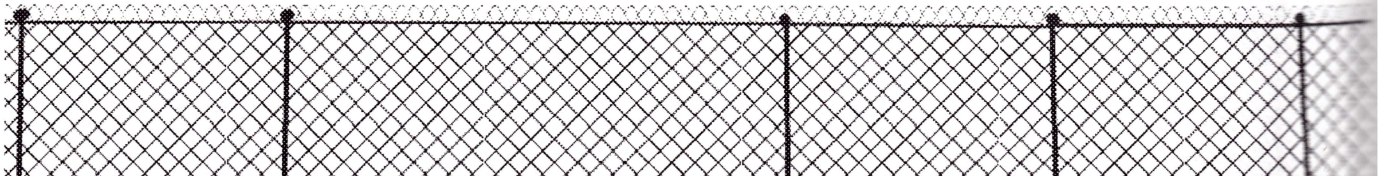
Skills

Climbing	1
Hand-to-Hand Combat	2
Firearms	3
Art (sculpture)	1
Gambling	2
Driving	3
Mechanics	2
Toolsmithing	2





The Aardvark is, to put it simply, completely insane. She is convinced that there are enemy forces massing to destroy her, is obsessed with becoming strong enough to defeat them, takes her anger out on those around her, and finds it necessary to lie about everything — both to convince herself and those around her that the situation isn't so bad and to pretend to others that she is not the woman they're hunting down. The only reason she rules the Factors is that she is stronger, faster, and a better shot than anyone else in the gang, and she shoots down everyone who dares to oppose her. In anything.



"Bargain Basement" -- Epilogue

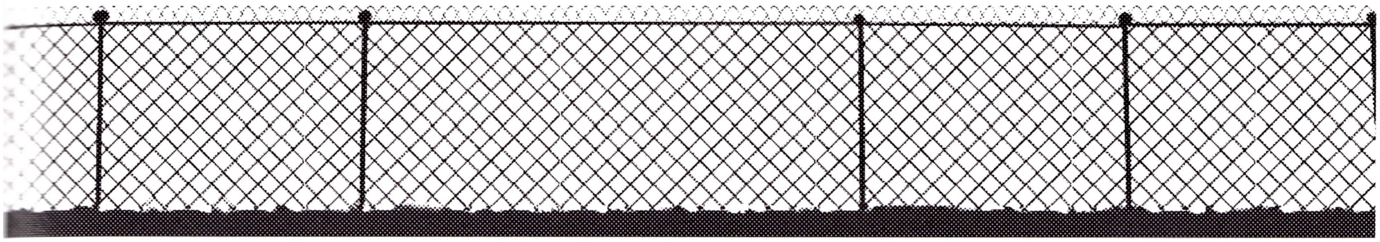
Miles away, deep within Offices, Doctor Shalmaneser stared at a flickering monitor, absorbing the trio's every move. His left hand scribbled frantically at a notepad, apparently oblivious to the rest of the body's immobility.

Already the experiment was working out better than he could have hoped — it was providing behavioral data that he never could have gained in a more rigidly-controlled environment. Now his three unsuspecting test subjects were crossing the basement floor, growing ever nearer to the "objects" of their desire, and now Shalmaneser was faced with a dilemma: should he allow them to actually attain the fabled goods, thus letting him examine the way greed and sudden wealth alter behavior, or should he instead test their survival reflexes and the after-effects of being so close to wealth and having to let it slip away in order to survive? Both contingencies had been planned, and could be activated by the push of single button — but which one to push?

If only Norman were here, he could offer a second opinion. Unfortunately, his faithful Nurse was still out in the Ward, keeping a physical eye on the trio and providing data whenever they were not under video surveillance. This one he would have to decide alone.

Shalmaneser considered both options carefully, weighing the merits of each in his mind, and finally, grudgingly, he came to a decision. Yes, despite everything, that would still be the best way to go. His free hand rose, undistracted by the uninterrupted writing of its mate, and drifted towards the two buttons displayed prominently along its top row of the battered console. The forefinger extended, aligned with its target, and slowly, almost lazily, zeroed in.

The button was pushed. And, far across the Ward, the fate of the trio of friends was decided for them.



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A Rockhound

aSyLuM

PLAYER

EPISODE

WARD

EXPERIENCE PTS.

NAME

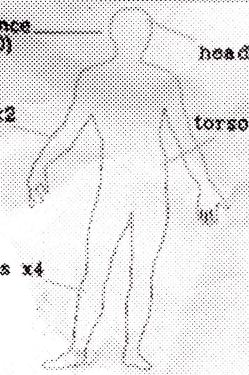
ATTITUDE

STATUS

OCCUPATION

IDENTIFICATION PHOTO

Resistance
(zealx20)



wound penalties	1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5
	-2	-4	-6	-8

gender
age
height
weight
hair
eyes

VITALS

Lucidity
Fluidity
Aura
Zeal
Movement

WEAPONS

doses
bullets

MISC. POSSESSIONS

QUIRKS

SKILLS:

PHYSICAL

MENTAL

OCCUPATIONAL

LTS

KNACKS

ABERRATIONS:

○
○
○
○
○
○

DISORDERS

FAULTS

DIFFICULTIES CHART

Simple	4
Easy	6
Complicated	8
Hard	10
Formidable	12

MARBLE VALUES

white	5
blue	4
green	3
red	2
black	1

BASIC DRAW

white,white	(10)
white,blue	(9)
blue,blue	(8)
blue,green	(7)
green,green	(6)
green,red	(5)
red,red	(4)
red,black	(3)
black,black	(2)

HIT LOCATION TABLE

white,white	head shot-damage is +2
white,blue	glancing head wound- +1
blue,blue	chest/stomach wound- +1
blue,green	shoulder wound
green,green	right arm
green,red	left arm
red,red	right leg
red,black	left leg
black,black	flesh wound-damage is -1

DEFAULT COMBAT DIFFICULTIES

Hand to Hand	Easy
Melee	Easy
Firearms	
point blank (w/in 5')	Simple
short range (5'-25')	Easy
medium range (25'-75')	Complicated
long range (75'-200')	Hard
extreme range (200'-300')	Formidable

WEAPON CHART

Guns*	8	3	300ft.	-2	J
Trank guns**	<special>	1	50ft.	-2	J
Tazers**	<special>	1	armspan	-	-
Swords	zeal+4	-	5ft.	-4	C
Bows	zeal+5	1	200ft.	-3	-
Crossbows	8	1	100ft.	-4	J
Knives	zeal+2	-	1ft.	-1	J
Staves	zeal+4	-	6ft.	-3	-
Clubs	zeal+3	-	3ft.	-3	C
Whips	zeal+2	-	6ft	-2	J
Chains	zeal+3	-	3ft.	-4	C
punch	zeal	-	armspan	-	-
kick	zeal+1	-	legspan	-	-
head butt	zeal+1	-	-	-	-

ABERRATION TABLE

white,white	
white,blue	
blue,blue	
blue,green	
green,green	
green,red	
red,red	
red,black	
black,black	

ABERRATION TABLE

white,white	
white,blue	
blue,blue	
blue,green	
green,green	
green,red	
red,red	
red,black	
black,black	

ABERRATION TABLE

white,white	
white,blue	
blue,blue	
blue,green	
green,green	
green,red	
red,red	
red,black	
black,black	

[illegible]TION TABLE

white,white	
white,blue	
blue,blue	
blue,green	
green,green	
green,red	
red,red	
red,black	
black,black	

No document left behind.

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Paranoids. Sociopaths. Pyros. Kleptos. Delusionals.They're all here — and you're one of them. Enter the world of Asylum, where the United States has been reduced to a collection of walled Wards, built from former cities and surrounded by desolate Wastelands. The sun has been gone for over a hundred years, hidden from view by the airborne algae called Blanket Seed, and everyone has gone mad. Those in the Wards are called Inmates, and they are cared for by Staff and watched over by the Orderlies, who are as insane as they are.

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